



YUKON YESTERDAYS

By the same Author :

In preparation

BIG GAME HUNTING IN THE UPPER KLONDIKE





The Author in winter dress.

YUKON YESTERDAYS

Thirty Years of Adventure in the Klondike

Personal memories of the famous Klondike Gold Rush,
first-hand accounts of lucky strikes, stories of Dawson
in the wild 'Nineties, together with adventures
in mining, exploring and big game
hunting in the unknown
sub-Arctic

By

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O.B.E., F.R.G.S.

WITH 54 ILLUSTRATIONS AND 2 MAPS (ENDPAPERS)



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YUKON YESTERDAYS

CHAPTER I

OFF TO ELDORADO

EVEN to-day the Klondike is the show place of the Pacific Coast. It is visited yearly by thousands of tourists whose appetites for authentic experiences and romances of the gold mines are insatiable.

As a youngster I had a share in that world-famous "rush," was the purchaser and manager of one of the most productive mines on Cheechako Hill, and since then I have spent, off and on, over thirty years in the Yukon, prospecting, mining, big game hunting and exploring, so that I have an intimate acquaintance with that far-thrown country of sub-Arctic desolation and drama.

I may mention that my name is on the map there—literally—for as a reward for my many years of exploration work on the Upper McMillan River, the Geographic Board of Canada honoured me by naming the highest peak in the Russel Range in that district Mount

Armstrong, while the confluence of Russel Creek with the Upper McMillan is known as Armstrong Landing.

I kept full day-by-day diaries of all my trips with their hopes, thrills, doubts and dangers, and from these I here intend to go back over the old trails, taking such as care to follow to face again the primitive wildness of those far-off days and nights in Dawson, to share the sensation of gold finding, not to mention the hardships of the trails and the 60-below shudders when for long months of intense cold we were frozen in, hundreds of miles from our nearest fellows.

The story starts half a lifetime ago—thirty-seven years—when after ranching down in New Mexico I heard first of the discovery of gold in the Yukon. I returned to London, where my father was interested in certain mining companies, and eventually, though still only twenty years of age, was appointed assistant-manager of the Yukon Goldfields Co. Ltd.

It is not easy to recapture in words the intense excitements to that youngster who was I, making that then hazardous excursion to Dawson. We to-day, contemptuously familiar with five-thousand-mile "hops" by 'plane, with our modern luxuries of travel by ship and train, must find it difficult to visualise the discomforts and constant threats that accompanied the 1898 transit into the remoter parts of the earth.

Dawson then was but a very small name on a very big map. No one knew how to get there. Thousands,

bitten by the gold bug, were asking in every corner of the world what was the best way to the land of Eldorado. Telegrams piled up on the office desks of the Pacific newspapers beseeching information as to the quickest and least hazardous trail. Fortune seekers came from all quarters, literally in thousands from far-away Australia. These latter headed directly for San Francisco, Seattle and Vancouver, and by dint of good boosting it was Seattle that captured most of the prospectors' money for equipment, provisions, etc. Vancouver and Victoria, B.C., missed the tide badly, whereas they had just as good a chance to make their towns popular jumping-off places for the long trail north.

There were several routes—all ghastly. It is no exaggeration to say that in some cases a man could follow the tracks by the dead men and horses that lined them. Possibly some eighty per cent of the gold seekers chose the Skagway and Dyea routes, and I may mention that in '98 every prospector crossing the border from U.S. to Canada, because of the shortage in Dawson, had to have with him a year's supply—about one and a half tons—of food, and because of the almost unbelievable hardships that had to be faced hundreds of tons of provisions were discarded by men who became too exhausted to go further.

The reader will understand that a man had to relay if he possessed no horse to help him. Imagine the endless stream of human beings day after day, week after week,

ascending that snow-covered path to the top of White Pass three thousand feet high, each going forward a mile, dropping a load and returning for another consignment, trying to stagger under a greater weight than he could carry. Even those with horses were little better placed ; it was more than the animals could stand. The Skagway trail was in places corduroyed with the carcasses of dead horses. For many years after the great rush, when a railroad was operating, passengers could still look out of the train windows and see the old trail marked by bleached bones.

There is a photograph in existence showing the stampeders in that year going from Dyea up to the Chilcoot Pass. Taken from a distance, it looks like an unbroken black line drawn down the icy slope of the mountain—there is no gap in the procession of men on the trail which, at that point, was so narrow that if a miner dropped out, he could not again find a place in the queue probably for hours. There was one route for the men ascending and another for them to come back to take up a further portion of their loads. Lord knows ! it was hard enough to make one journey, yet every one had to carry that ton and a half, which meant half a dozen journeys or more. A big snowslide occurred in '98, burying and killing a large number of men. It seemed as if Nature had not only hidden her golden treasure in one of the most ungetatable places on earth, but had guarded it with a chain of almost insurmountable dangers.

No wonder that hundreds of the weaker stampeders returned to the base to take the first steamer back home !

Once over the White Pass the going was not so terrible. There was, however, a lack of firewood and, as can be imagined, the few stunted jack pines and spruces very soon disappeared. Piercing winds accompanied by severe snowstorms swept these heights and a sort of plague of meningitis broke out, so that many a good man went west. At Lake Bennett most of the prospectors built boats of a sort and waited for the ice to go out in the spring. The last six hundred miles—roughly from John o' Groats to Land's End—was completed by water transport which was by no means devoid of risk. Not a few outfits were completely lost and many men drowned shooting the Whitehorse rapids.

The worst of the many trails was certainly the Edmonton route. I'm sorry even to think of the poor devils who undertook this journey—Edmonton, Great Slave Lake, Mackenzie River (in scows or boats for hundreds of miles), Fort Simpson, Fort McPherson on the Peel River, up the Rat River (where it was necessary to drag the boats against swift water and rock), then overland many weary miles to the head waters of the Porcupine River, inside the Arctic Circle, where travellers had to relay supplies on their backs, cut a trail and drag boats on wooden rollers to a further river 200 miles down, where stood Fort Yukon. Here they got a small steamer for the final 120 miles to Dawson.

Look at a map and let your imagination picture a green-horn doing this tremendous journey. Yet he went in thousands, because this route was extensively advertised.

I personally knew four Englishmen who dropped their pens in London offices and made this particular trip. Knowing nothing of the conditions out there, they took from England picks, shovels and other essentials (mostly unsuitable), even telegraphing to Winnipeg to have four bales of hay reserved for them ! What a pity one of them did not keep a diary ; it would have been priceless among souvenirs of the Klondike stampede.

It may be stated briefly that it took the party eight months to reach Fort McPherson, during which time they had dropped many thousands of pounds of their supplies. Here winter overtook them, so they built a cabin and remained until the following year. It says something for their spirit that they refused to be beaten and kept slogging on for another five months, when they entered Dawson—thus reaching it in 1899, having left London in November of '97 !

I was the first Englishman to go to Dawson by an all-water route and that was because my father was fortunate enough to meet the general manager of the Alaska Commercial Co., one day in London. This company had recently established a fur trading post in Dawson and it was upon his advice that I went via New York, San Francisco, up the Pacific to South-West Alaska, into the Behring Sea—where we encountered innumer-

able ice-floes—and so to the mouth of the Yukon River. Here we transferred to a shallow-draft stern-wheeled steamer owned by this company which was making its maiden voyage over that final stage of *one thousand seven hundred miles* up the river, a “hop” that took us twenty-two days.

Not until San Francisco did the heady flavour of the trip become assertive. It was there we definitely left comfort and set our faces towards the bleak north.

You may imagine how impatient a young man of twenty-very-little-odd was at delay that was occasioned there—waiting for the vessel that was to take him beyond the Arctic Circle into his land of dreams. Days passed, relieved only by a spot of shopping, including a big Stetson hat which, though it may have subscribed to my sense of the picturesque, was nevertheless useful since I was journeying to the land of the midnight sun, and it would keep mosquito nets from flapping against my face.

At length the good ship *St. Paul* was billed to leave on June 11th at midday.

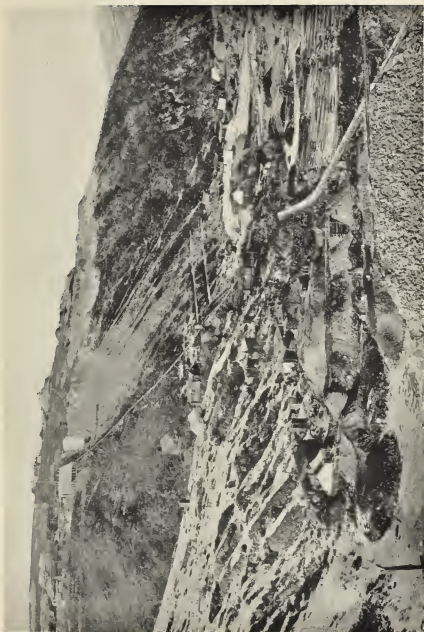
I went on board at 11 a.m. She was a small coastal steamer about 1500 tons and brand new. Because this was her maiden voyage she was simply smothered in flowers—all the fire-buckets were crammed with the most gorgeous roses, sweet peas and dozens of other species and the tables were covered with blooms—while the wharf was crowded with people to see this, the first steamer off for the Klondike.

What were my thoughts as our steamer slowly swung round and headed for the Golden Gate? I had no friends to see me off. I was many thousands of miles from my home, but nevertheless, I was supremely happy, with my heart full of romance. Three days before leaving England I had become engaged to my cousin, and it was of her I was thinking as we were now at last committed to this great adventure. How long would it be before we met again? Should I strike it rich and return to wedding bells and "living happy ever after"?

The long thoughts of youth—enhanced that night by a glorious sunset which faced us as we passed out of San Francisco harbour and steamed into the Pacific Ocean.

It interested me later to size up our passengers. What manner of people were these who would journey with me to the Klondike and try their luck?

My first gasp of astonishment came when I observed an old man of at least seventy years of age and his wife, who looked older. He was a well-to-do farmer from the state of Missouri, yet he had sold out everything and Darby and Joan were now *en route* to Dawson where the poor old things confidently expected they would be able to stake some rich ground and hire miners to work for them. The old boy had a violin with him which he played incessantly, much to the annoyance at times of the occupants of the adjoining cabin. The sequel to the story is that the old man and his wife remained in Dawson only a few days, returning by steamer whence they came!



General view of Cheechako Hill from which millions of dollars were mined in the first years of its discovery. In left foreground is Skookum Hill. The valley is Bonanza Creek showing discovery claim and Nos. 1, 2 and 3 above discovery.

THE NEWSPAPER
LABORER



The entrance to our cross-cut tunnel—Cheechako Hill claims—showing white quartz boulders and gravel. Very rich pay streak in this tunnel.



The Author's palatial home on Bonanza Creek in 1899. His first home being a log cabin just half the size of that on the left of this photograph. In the background is Cheechako Hill, showing excavations made by prospectors who were just beginning to locate the rich bench deposit of alluvial gold.

Our passengers were a queer mixture. Prominent among them were two middle-aged American ladies from New York—a Miss Van Buren (niece of the late President of that name) and a Mrs. Hitchcock, whose late husband had been an officer in the U.S. Navy.

These ladies were apparently quite rich and, besides hoping to stake good claims, they were taking a most varied assortment of articles for sale and barter. They had with them two enormous Great Danes, which were a perfect curse when we were finally ascending the Yukon River. They also had a large marquee tent, a bowling alley equipment, a cinematograph, about fifty live pigeons, some canaries—and tons of canned foods and delicacies. Later I met them on Bonanza Creek under the guidance of big Alec Macdonald—the “King of the Klondike.” They were attired in a most peculiar “get-up,” especially considering they were big women with much *embonpoint*! Both wore blue and white knitted jerseys over tightly laced corsages, leather belts with holsters containing large revolvers, blue serge knickers (mild plus-fours of to-day), stockings and short rubber boots, and on top of all, large, wide-brimmed Stetson hats. For the rest our passengers consisted of farmers, bar-tenders, saloon keepers, miners, business men, clerks and an ex-senator of California, by name Jeremiah Lynch, of whom more anon.

After leaving Dutch Harbour on the Alaska Peninsula we ran into ice—moving floes—and we were soon

steaming very slowly through an immense field which showed that Behring Strait and Norton Sound were opening up while we were also told that masses of the ice were coming from the mighty Yukon River. Now we experienced the most awe-inspiring stillness. In the rarefied atmosphere the crunch of floe against floe could be heard miles away, and occasionally the eerie silence would be broken by the slight splash of a seal or walrus as these animals slid off slabs of ice at our approach.

We were now in Norton Sound, heading for the Island of St. Michaels which was our destination. After three days in the ice, land came in sight—a low-lying coast with mountain ranges in the far distance. The water here is very shallow—at the deepest about 24 fathoms—and two miles off shore our steamer was stirring up mud, so we came to anchor.

The weather was getting hotter with twenty-three hours of sunshine—the Arctic Midnight Sun. It seemed impossible to go to bed in sunshine at 11 p.m.

We had to wait here for our river transportation to Dawson—a small steamer might arrive any day. We were taken ashore in the ship's boats and here I made my first acquaintance with Eskimos and their splendid huskie dogs; also watched them handling their kayaks (skin canoes) and "bedarkies" (large skin canoes) when hunting seals and walrus.

The mosquitoes on land were too awful to describe. It was impossible to move without a net over one's face

and gloves on one's hands. A few days after dropping anchor, other craft made their appearance—a fairly large American passenger steamer called the *Roanoke*, with gold-seekers on board, several sealing schooners from the Arctic bringing splendid catches of fur, principally white fox and Polar bear, the American Revenue cutter *Bear*, a wonderful old wooden ship purchased from the British Navy, and, lastly, a small American gunboat called the *Wheeling*, bringing supplies and reinforcement for the Army Post at St. Michaels.

Every day now we waited anxiously for the river steamer to arrive ; we were eager to carry on to Dawson. At length, on July 2nd, about 3 p.m., there was a shout of "Steamboat—steamboat," and in the distance, coming from the direction of the mouth of the Yukon, we spied a tiny flat-bottomed, stern-wheel steamer with one smoke-stack. Luckily the sea was smooth or she would have foundered, since she possessed only a couple of feet of free-board.

Our passengers gathered on deck amidst much controlled excitement. Here was our first glimpse of a steamer and passengers direct from Dawson—from the Eldorado of the North. Now we should get first-hand information. As she approached we could see a lot of people on the small, low-lying fore-deck and on top of the deck-house, and could hear huskie dogs howling on board.

When within about a hundred yards of us we noticed a most unpleasant stench coming from the little steamer.

The closer she came to the *St. Paul* the more pronounced was the smell. We wondered what it could possibly be ; something dead, it seemed. Finally, she came alongside and was made fast. Her name was *May West*. A gang plank was put out from the saloon deck and a good many of us went down to see the passengers come aboard us. What a sight ! Never shall I forget it. It was my first view of a flat-bottomed stern-wheeler ; of the effects of cold which maims and kills, of bad scurvy—and of placer gold in large quantities.

Up the gangway came men in heavy winter clothes, unshaven, unwashed, with long hair and ravenous-looking faces. Then a man staggering under what looked like a huge Bologna sausage on his shoulder. It was a long leather bag.

“ Gee whiz, people, look at that gold—it’s gold he’s got in that ‘ poke,’ ” someone said.

And he was right. It *was* gold.

Next I saw a man without feet being carried up on another man’s back. We were told that the sufferer had been on a wild gold stampede to Swede Creek, near Dawson, without taking adequate footwear. The temperature had fallen many degrees below zero and, before the poor chap could get help, his feet were frozen so badly that eventually they both had to be amputated. Now he was going back home, hopes unrealised, ambition dead—footless !

Two men followed staggering along with a square

box heavily bound with strip iron ; it was all they could do to carry it. This was all gold dust—over \$100,000 worth.

All the horrors of filth and physical hurt could not prevent the thrill which the sight of that gold brought me.

And there was human damage and filth a-plenty aboard that tiny steamer. All the food she carried had disappeared entirely three days before. The dogs howled from hunger and the passengers were almost as primitively savage in their cravings for something to eat. There had been no opportunity for washing ; men were as dirty as the small decks—hence the atrocious odour that had spread ahead to warn us and now engulfed us suffocatingly.

While I stood watching beside Jeremiah Lynch, another derelict from the stampede was carried up. No hands or feet this time.

“What’s the matter with him ? ” I asked one of his companions.

“Scurvy and frostbite,” was the laconic answer.

The victim’s face was black, and there is little question but that he died before reaching home. He was only one of many in similar plight. Men had lost all their teeth through that dread scourge of the lone lands, while another trouble that raged was phthisis ; the one and only woman passenger on the *May West* was eaten up with it—a miner’s wife who had left her husband behind and was quite obviously “going out” to die.

But there were golden rays between all this gloom ! Men strode up that plank carrying "pokes" that contained young fortunes. Some had one, some two, one on each shoulder, while one pair swaggered up, each holding the end of a stick, on the centre of which swung a sizey suitcase—filled with gold !

In all, about a hundred and twenty men came aboard, and when it was made known that there had been sleeping accommodation for only twenty-five people on the steamer they had just left, it is hardly necessary for me to attempt to describe what the sanitary and other conditions must have been like.

I noticed one man in particular whose general appearance seemed different from the rest of the passengers. He was old—grey hair and beard, blue eyes, thin nose, an intellectual face and soft, educated voice. He was dressed in a reindeer "parkey" fur cap and "Much-luck" boots. I wondered who he was and what could have taken the old man to Dawson in 1897. It was obvious he must have spent the winter of '97-'98 in there. It was not long before I found out that he was none other than Joaquin Miller, the Californian poet. Before we parted he gave me a copy of one of the poems he wrote in Dawson, entitled "Comrades of the Klondike."

I shall never forget the first meal that was served after these Klondikers came aboard. It was dinner. I had, of course, imagined that, in view of their half-

starved state, they would be given priority ; but no, the Purser stated that, as usual, we should dine first.

There was a gallery overlooking the saloon on three sides and, when we had all taken our seats, we looked up, and there, standing shoulder to shoulder, leaning over the bannisters of the gallery, was a row of unkempt, unwashed, bearded men, like a pack of hungry wolves watching with glittering eyes every mouthful we devoured and praying that we would be quick about it. As far as I was concerned, my appetite was soon satisfied and I withdrew. When the tables had been cleared and re-set and the gong sounded, there was certainly a stampede, not to stake a claim, but to fall greedily on the first platefuls of meat, cheese, pickles and bread. We were now up in the gallery as spectators. No effort was made by the stewards to wait on this horde ; food was placed in large dishes on each table and it then became free for all. The proceedings were dangerous at times, forks and knives flashing about as men speared slices of meat, bread, potatoes—reaching all over the table. There was no necessity to change plates for any pudding or sweets—everything was taken on the same one. Fingers were freely used and knives instead of spoons. Within fifteen minutes everyone had finished and the tables were swept clean.

That night I naturally took opportunity to ask the new arrivals about the goldfields. Here was a chance of obtaining first-hand knowledge of conditions. Some

said they were leaving rich claims behind as it did not pay to work them owing to the exorbitant royalty demanded by the Canadian Government.

One man would affirm that the people in Dawson were so wealthy that they paid any price for desired articles, while the next said people were so poor they could not pay for their passage out of the country.

But what was most damping to the spirits of the gold-seekers was the statement that the whole Klondike district was now staked so that new prospectors would have to travel far afield.

Also that typhoid had broken out and food was very scarce.

But quite apart from all the hard-luck stories, there was no question regarding the great richness of Bonanza and Eldorado Creeks and some others. And that was the point I wanted to get at. It was a comforting fact that the passengers on the *May West* were taking out about \$400,000 between them. The sight of all this gold and the knowledge that where this came from there must be more, only filled me with a frantic desire to be off, to get on with our journey. Every hour might be important. I knew there were thousands of excited prospectors converging on Dawson by many routes—particularly the White and Chilcoot Passes—and we hoped to beat them to it. Every hour counted.

At last, on July 5th, we sailed, not in the odorous *May West*, but in a new and powerful stern-wheeler,

Leah, launched that day, pulling a large barge. There was accommodation on both steamer and barge for passengers. If I remained on the *Leah* I should have to share a tiny cabin with someone else, but if I decided on the barge I could have a room with three bunks, one above the other, to myself. I chose the latter.

And so, exactly two months after leaving London, I was steaming slowly towards Eldorado. It was frightfully hot. Mosquitoes and black gnats filled the air, and in the neighbourhood of the Yukon flats it was impossible to sleep at night. But what was more disturbing was the constant repetition of those tales we had heard in St. Michaels. These met us all the way, told in shouts by men in every manner of craft that passed us coming down from Dawson.

One and all advised us to turn back ! The town was ridden with typhoid. The streets were full of dead. All the mines were shut down and there were 10,000 men out of work. Every inch of the gold-bearing land had been staked out.

But on we went, the first ship to make the trip since the winter ice had melted, feeling our way gingerly with constant soundings, stopping hours every day to cut wood from the banks to keep the boilers going, occasionally picking up the local post from some scattered station by receiving on board a letter attached to a chunk of wood thrown from the bank, and once passing through a tremendous cloud of smoke from a forest fire.

CHAPTER II

THE REAL DISCOVERER OF THE KLONDIKE —A WOMAN

ON the morning of July 27th, the golden Mecca of the North appeared before my eager gaze. At first it was but a bundle of white dots on the side of the hill, but as we drew closer I began to make out myriads of cabins, huts, boats, rafts and warehouses, and when at long last we fussed up to the landing-stage, there must have been a full thousand men and women of every nationality assembled there.

All these people had spent a long and bitterly cold Arctic winter in the town and the surrounding districts and were thirsting for news of the "Outside World"; also for the chance of obtaining fresh food of some sort, as provisions became seriously short when the Yukon River froze up early in October of the previous year.

Before our little steamer had time to make fast to the wharf, the river bank was swarming with miners and huskie dogs were howling and joining in the general din.

Front street in Dawson at that time consisted only of the levelled-off bank of the river, the buildings being set back thirty feet from the water,

We had brought some San Francisco newspapers with us, and the Captain, standing on the top of his pilot-house, read aloud the principal news items (six weeks old) to the hundreds of residents gathered on the bank. Later in the day an enterprising miner hired a large tent and posted a notice outside saying that for an entrance fee of \$1 all the news contained in a few San Francisco newspapers which had just arrived would be read aloud to the audience between certain hours. This man collected a very considerable sum of money.

All sorts of signs and notices were to be seen as one walked down the main muddy street or on the rickety wooden sidewalks. One sign in particular caught my eye—it was painted on a strip of white canvas stretched across the road on poles, and read as follows :

“ Charlie Brimstone—Undertaker—Bodies embalmed and shipped to the ‘ outside.’ ”

This was not a very encouraging notice for the tenderfoot. Moreover, I found it alarmingly true that typhoid fever was rampant, the death rate being about a hundred and twenty per week.

Thousands of newcomers got “ cold feet ” as soon as they arrived in Dawson and news spread that the whole country had been staked and there was no earthly hope of striking anything. This, coupled with the accounts of the intense winter cold, the high prices of provisions

and the fact that typhoid was raging, proved too much for the weak-kneed ones.

But the enthusiasm of youth is not easily quashed, certainly not on the very threshold of adventure. Besides, I was luckily not in the position of thousands of these men who had flocked here without proper provision and nothing to fall back upon, imagining vaguely that the water in every creek flowed over solid gold dust or that they had but to scratch the earth's crust to come upon the precious metal. I was the accredited representative of a substantial firm with capital to buy what holdings I thought promising. All this vast crowd of fortune-hunters were, indeed, in a pitiful plight, without sufficient food, through the long cold, living in small log cabins and even tents. It is a marvel that so many weathered the winter and lived to see our steamer with its provisions draw to the stage.

Immediately after my arrival I looked about for some man of experience of the country who could give me a few "pointers," and in this I was exceptionally fortunate in meeting the famous George Carmack, the actual discoverer of the Klondike.

From him I had, indeed, a first-hand account of that baking day in August when an Indian woman, Carmack's wife, looked into a pan she had washed—and set the whole world tingling.

Here's the story of it.

Carmack, who was an American prospector, and Kate,



A meeting of Klondike miners in Front Street, Dawson, 1898, demanding better government.



The mighty Yukon River breaking up its ice in the late spring.



Donkey transport hauling sluice lumber out to the mines. Few of these little animals survived the first winter, 1898.

THE NEWBERG
LUMBER

his native wife, together with his two brothers-in-law, "Skookum" Jim and Tagish Charlie, were slowly wending their way up Rabbit Creek—as Bonanza Creek was originally called—on the way to a creek called Gold Bottom, in which a prospector named Henderson had found most encouraging prospects in placer gold. Henderson and Carmack were friends, and the former had advised the latter to visit Gold Bottom and they would do a bit of real prospecting there.

It was a very hot day when the outfit made camp about one mile below the mouth of Eldorado Creek, as it was afterwards named. The trail had been a rough one, and the mosquitoes were plentiful. Carmack was tired and went to sleep in his tent after they had finished a meal of dried salmon, of which they were in possession of a considerable quantity, as before starting up Rabbit Creek they had been fishing for salmon at the mouth of the Klondike River. Klondike is a contraction of the Indian word *troan-dike*, meaning "plenty salmon," or "plenty fish."

While he slept, Kate took a pan and shovel and started washing along the rim rock of the creek which was exposed, and on which was a shallow deposit of fine gravel. Her first pan revealed quite a number of colours—a good prospect in fact. She carried on, and then, in washing another pan, she obtained about twenty cents. So excited was she that she ran across to the tent and quickly woke up Carmack to show him the results

she had obtained. He, too, was excited over the find, and they there and then decided to pitch camp and sink a shaft—they, of course, had no idea how deep the creek gravels were to bedrock. They went down five or six feet before they struck frost, and then they rigged up a windlass and picked their way down. At fifteen feet, streaks of sediment and clay were met with, yielding good prospects, as much as a dollar to the pan.

Intense excitement prevailed in the small camp. Finally, at sixteen feet, Carmack reached bedrock. He told me that he scraped the top of this very carefully, and putting it all into a pan, he came out of the shaft and washed it out. It produced \$238 ! Carmack put this in a glass bottle and always carried it on him—at any rate, when talking to him on the Discovery claim in August, 1898, he produced the bottle from his pocket and told me the story. It so happened that by the merest fluke Carmack had sunk his shaft on one of the richest spots on the Bonanza Creek claim ; this sort of luck has happened frequently, even to myself.

For many years after the discovery it was a sore point with Bob Henderson that Carmack failed to notify him of his great discovery. He was less than a day's journey from the scene of the strike, and his contention was that unless he had found gold on Gold Bottom Creek, Carmack would never have struck gold on Bonanza, because he had no intention of prospecting in that part of the country before he had met Henderson. Henderson

argued that he was the discoverer of the Klondike and, in fact, he pressed his views to such good purpose that the Canadian Government awarded him an annuity of \$200 (£40) per month.

Immediately after striking bedrock and rich gold, Carmack and his Indian relatives staked out discovery claims and proceeded in all haste to the mouth of the Klondike where they took boat and went off down the Yukon to Forty Mile post, where they recorded their claims and notified the community of their rich strike, producing the gold they had brought with them. At first little credence was given to the story because he had on previous occasions started stampedes to various districts which had all been failures, but before long the whole community of Forty Mile and Circle City had left their cabins and belongings and hurried off to the New Eldorado.

Thus the famous stampede began.

I saw a good deal of Carmack and his wife Kate during the autumn of 1898 when he was working his claim and I was on No. 4 Below Discovery. One day I gave Kate a drink of citric acid lemonade. She apparently liked this very much because she came round next day and asked me in her broken English for some more "drink medicine," which I gave her. A few days afterwards I found a large dried salmon hanging on a nail outside my cabin door. This was no doubt in exchange for my citric acid. I'm afraid I had not the temerity to eat

this offering as my stomach had not at this period become sufficiently hardened to the Indians' idea of cleanliness in handling their fish, themselves, or their food generally.

George Carmack suffered badly from rheumatism. He went from Dawson in the fall of '98 and left the management of his claim to a relative or relatives. Carmack emigrated to California and only returned to Dawson on short visits.

I met him a few years later in San Francisco and while discussing Bonanza Creek and its richness, I asked him whether he had taken out a considerable fortune for his claim.

"No," he said, "my share came to about \$60,000 ; my relatives got the rest."

CHAPTER III

KLONDIKE'S BIGGEST NUGGET—MINE !

IT was from Carmack that I purchased No. 4 Below Discovery on Bonanza Creek of which he was part owner with the late Tex Rickard—the boxing promoter, whom I knew quite well later as a saloon proprietor and also as Manager of Madison Square Garden, New York. Carmack and Rickard had prospected No. 4 Claim in the previous winter, but had not struck any rich pay. I made him an offer ; we came to terms and the claim was mine—I took a chance.

On August 16th George Carmack and I left Dawson with small packs on our backs, for Bonanza Creek, I to take over No. 4 Below Discovery, and Carmack to return to his own Discovery Claim to watch the “ clean up ” of gold dust which was taking place.

Our trail led along the bank of the Klondike River for about two-and-a-half miles, when we crossed in a small row boat and proceeded up the valley of Bonanza Creek (which is a tributary of the Klondike River). We had a 15-mile walk over a bad trail, mud everywhere and mosquitoes by the million.

Every few miles we stopped at a road-house where food

of sorts and liquor were disposed of at high prices. A small section of heavy "pie" (made of dried fruit) and a cup of bad coffee were sold for 6s. Whiskey was 2s. per drink and champagne £12 per quart. The previous winter candles fetched 4s. each, flour £20 per sack of 50 lbs., dried fruit 4s. per lb., and I actually paid £80 for a side of beef from a yoke ox—which was as tough as boot leather !

About 5.30, tired and muddy, Carmack showed me the claim and the log cabin which was to be my headquarters through the coming winter. The cabin measured 12 feet by 10 feet. I could stand erect only in the centre of it, under the ridge pole. My claim measured 500 feet by 300 feet up and down-stream.

Many shafts had been sunk here and yet the output had not exceeded £2000. The outlook was not too hopeful, but the location of the claim was excellent as the gravel above and below me was very rich.

By the middle of September I had thirty men at work preparing for winter mining, on the understanding that they would be paid the following spring—and no gold, no pay.

Shaft after shaft was sunk during the early part of the winter by means of wood fires to thaw the frozen gravel, but no rich pay was found. Things looked discouraging and, coupled with this, no letters or papers were received in Dawson until December (when the North-West Mounted Police took over the mail transport with dog

teams, from Lake Bennet to Dawson, 600 miles—my last letter previously to December was received in August).

I had enough food for the winter, principally beans, bacon, rice, oatmeal, sugar, with an occasional piece of moose or caribou meat.

That was my first experience of the real cold. I spent the entire winter alone in that small cabin on Bonanza and there were mornings when, jumping out of my bunk, I found the thermometer showed over fifty degrees below zero. Everything in the cabin was frozen solid—the bread like chunks of granite—and there was danger of frostbite before one could get the shavings alight. You may be sure I always kept myself well supplied with fuel and, between the work at the mine, most of my time was spent chopping both wood and ice, since fire and water are among the very essentials of existence.

It was not much more than existence. I had plenty of food of a sort, but during one spell, when I was without cash, I yearned for fresh meat, being ill and afraid of scurvy. One was not utterly alone, for other miners were working their claims all around and would drop in, while occasionally dog teams passed backwards and forwards, the men often suffering from frostbite. Queer how suddenly that gets one—like a finger suddenly touching a part that is exposed with some deadly power in its tip that rots the flesh so that it turns black and peels off. And the intense cold atrophies

the spot ; one doesn't feel anything until with warmth the circulation begins again—then the pain starts !

I remember one morning I was chopping wood within five yards of my own cabin when a stranger passed. He looked at me and was about to give some greeting when instead, he cried : “ Say, partner, your nose is froze.”

It was—as I knew well enough during the next hour.

Occasionally I went down to Dawson—in all weathers. It was a 14-mile hike and, when no blizzard was blowing, and the mercury was not too low, was little more than a pleasant morning's exercise. The best journey I ever made was the day we got news that Dawson was burning down. I made the trip on foot in two hours twenty minutes that morning. We had a cabin in Dawson full of supplies and I was anxious to find if the conflagration had touched it. It was a pretty bad blaze which might have easily razed the city to the ground, but happily it was got under control. They started an all-night fire patrol after that, the residents forming squads of volunteers. I slept on the cabin floor that night and it was beastly—eight below zero !

The cold closed down early in November. You couldn't go out without your moustache being frozen to your face and white frost forming on your eyebrows. Icicles made an imitation beard and the wind would go through your clothing like a knife.

All the time the work went on. The ground was

frozen solid to the rock base, sometimes a couple of hundred feet down and, in order to work the sluice-boxes, this had to be first thawed by means of wood fires. A strenuous life, but men will give all they have of energy when gold is the lure.

Still to me it was a grand life. Though I was cut off from my own world, not getting even as much as a letter from August until the next spring ; though I lived under the severest straits, and though for several months we struck little to encourage us, yet at twenty it was very much of an odyssey. I never had serious doubts that I should strike lucky ; I was thrilled to the bone at the accounts of strikes all round me ; I felt I was indeed living and I know I would have changed places with none of my youthful friends back home who were living in luxury and warmth.

Even to-day I want to go back—as I always have gone back throughout the years that have followed. Please the good God I shall return when certain difficulties are removed and I am free.

I turn over that old '98 diary and envy the young man who was myself. Hardships? Yes. But wasn't it grand living? Let me cull a few entries almost at haphazard.

Nov. 1st. In Dawson. Did not get back to cabin last night until 2 a.m. Up rather late. Three Indians and an Englishman were to have been

hanged this morning, but at the last moment it was discovered to be All Saints' Day and therefore against the Canadian Law to hang anyone, so the execution has been delayed until to-morrow. I understand the Indians howled hideously all night long.

Nov. 2nd. Another freezing night on the hard boards with the thermometer below zero. Set off with "Doc," he with his team of five malamutes and two sledges both heavily laden with provisions. We went at a spanking trot along the frozen Yukon river then up Bonanza with the icy cold wind nipping our noses and cheeks and our breath forming hoar frost on the upturned collars of our coats. My moccasins got wet in a water-hole and thence onward it was like wearing glass shoes. I fell about a hundred times and we had great excitement shooting full pelt down frozen hills. Sometimes the sledges turned over and everything came off. Arrived at the claim with your clothes frozen stiff and our bodies much the same.

Nov. 18th. Temperature 46 below zero. Bread, bacon, milk, water all frozen in the cabin. At eleven o'clock. Murphy and I started for 36 Eldorado. Before accomplishing ten miles my moustache was a solid mass of ice extending to my chin, my eyelashes froze together at the outside corners and my hands perspired, which froze my mitts stiff as a

board ; got in just as my fingers were beginning to freeze.

Nov. 22nd. Justice (from neighbouring claim) turned up from Dawson bringing 400 lbs. of flour, beans and sugar. He took a drink of rum down the trail and in the intense coldness it made him drunk. He came along singing loudly and falling down at every other step !

Dec. 4th. Water in creek this morning frozen right through to the bed. Brodie called and slept on floor (I will tell you the romantic story of Brodie in the chapter on Dawson Characters).

Dec. 7th. Hacked off meat and put the rest to freeze. Shall have to saw what I want from it now.

Dec. 25th. Christmas dinner with a few friends. Put gold dust in the plum pudding ! We ought to be ill after this. Only 3 degrees below zero to-day. Quite warm !

Dec. 29th. 53 below. I think this must be the coldest cabin on the hill. Can see several holes in the moss on roof.

Jan. 20th. Gibson turned up about 11 p.m. last night and craved a night's shelter. A most extraordinary little chap. He was broke to the world the other day, borrowed 150 dollars and the next hour lost it all playing faro. Doesn't care a scrap. Left for Diamond Creek this morning.

Jan. 23rd. Moon shining brightly at 3 p.m. Just made a batch of yeast bread—rising nicely.

Jan. 29th. (Sunday.) Sun shone for a few minutes this morning. After clearing up breakfast went for a walk, then locked cabin door, arranged myself comfortably in chair and read through the service of the day, after which I hummed a few hymns. Then lay back for several hours and thought of old days—England—and my present loneliness.

Feb. 3rd. Fainted in club at Dawson. Doctor said it was bad food. Got a "nervous heart." Mustn't drink tea or coffee, nor can I smoke. While here, heard that someone was inquiring at bank in London as to whether I was alive. Wonder who it can be?

These are the merest glimpses of the life I led that winter. It was just one long tale of cold and more cold. We had many days with the thermometer at 46 below zero and one when it touched 52. Men came and went, frozen, struggling to maintain life and scratch out some sort of living in that ice-bound region. We played cards sometimes and thought of home, the West End with its gaieties and its warmth. We drank to the old folks and endlessly we talked of the luck that came here and there to those we knew about the claims.

And then Dame Fortune called at No. 4. Early in



A stampeder of '97 worn out on the trail.



Prospectors on the Skagway route meet disappointed miners returning from Dawson.

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The Big Fire in Dawson City, 1898.

February we struck the rich paystreak very nearly off the boundary of the claim !

The sinking of a shaft on the extreme left limit was pure luck, and when it was started I thought it would only be waste of time, but as this shaft reached bedrock we struck the Bonanza paystreak averaging about 60 cents to the pan in places. We followed this paystreak by sinking more shafts and drifting from one to the other and cross-cutting—we frequently obtained pans yielding from \$12 to \$15. The excitement was to me intense. We had struck a winner !

But even this success was eclipsed one day—February 24th—when out of the same shaft came the biggest nugget up to that time found in Klondike !

It was the size of a big man's hand with the fingers clenched. Sufficient compensation alone for all the hardships of the long winter ! It weighed 64½ ozs. I slept that night with the treasure under my pillow, but, of course, the news quickly spread and for days people came to see it, until I could not get on with my work, having to stay in the cabin like a museum attendant !

I may say that later on, in Dawson, I was offered £400 for this one nugget by a saloon keeper, but refused it. Which was unfortunate as things turned out. I placed the precious nugget for safe keeping with the Bank of British North America, in Dawson, and soon after depositing it the bank caught fire and was burnt to the ground. The tin vault collapsed and the whole

contents were exposed to fire and water. Besides several million dollars' worth of gold dust and gold bricks, there was a considerable amount of private jewellery, including diamonds (belonging principally to the demi-mondaine). My nugget was found, but the heat had charred and split the quartz which ruined it as a specimen. However, the bank allowed me £300 for its gold content.

I shall never forget the night of that fire. The flames were raging and all that valuable property was at stake, yet even now I can see a friend of mine struggling down the back stairs, carrying, not gold or diamonds, but a small keg of whiskey ! That will give you some idea how precious the spirit of Scotland was at that time—in some minds !

When the snow melted and water began to run in Bonanza Creek, once again we commenced washing up the gravel we had mined during the winter and the work was finished on September 15th, by which time we had cleaned and sacked \$112,000 of high-grade gold dust, which was very considerably more than any of us had anticipated. It was a magnificent sight to see our pans filled with Bonanza Creek gold. Among the first to congratulate me on striking rich pay were George Carmack and his Indian wife, Kate.

It was decided later in the year to dispose of No. 4 just as it stood, rather than to incur the heavy expense of opening up the claim, as I was firmly of the opinion

that the paystreak, although rich, was only a very narrow one. This had been fairly well proved by our drifting operations.

In September, 1899, it was sold for \$111,000 to a young American mining man and some of his friends. Had we at this time visualised that in a few years large gold dredgers would be digging their way up Bonanza Creek, our claims if held could have been sold for at least \$25,000.

But No. 4 was only the beginning of what we cleaned up in the Klondike—and but an introduction to my adventures in the Yukon.

CHAPTER IV

MEMORIES OF WILD DAWSON

WILD excitements, misery, riches, debauchery, broken hearts, scurvy, frostbite, suicide ; the midnight sun, the Arctic night, the Aurora Borealis, the land of gold and paradoxes—that was Dawson in '98.

Entirely isolated, beyond the pale of civilisation, it was without one restraining influence. Vice and drunkenness became rampant. None but the staunchest characters trod the narrow path. The saloons were the only meeting-places of incoming miners with their bags of gold dust ; nearly everyone gathered in one or other of the gambling saloons or dance halls by day and night—their doors were never closed.

The saloons were always well lighted with oil lamps. Large stoves, made out of oil drums, heated the buildings. It was the warmth, the drink and the scantily clad women that contributed to the downfall of many a man.

There was, of course, another side as well. Romance, life-long friendships made, the digging for gold, the feverish excitement when "panning" the gravel, watching expectantly for the glittering particles to appear, and

perhaps a nugget ! Then there were the innumerable stampedes to reported rich "strikes" in outlying districts, the staking of claims and the mad rush back to the Mining Office to record them. Afterwards came the sinking of prospect shafts to "bedrock" by means of wood fires to thaw the frozen gravel, perhaps only to strike a blank ! There was always the excitement caused by uncertainty whether one had a million-dollar claim or nothing.

The winter of '97-'98, as I have said, found Dawson short of food. The steamers due from St. Michaels with supplies had been frozen in on the lower Yukon. There was a fair supply of food at Fort Yukon, over a hundred miles north, and the Mounted Police urged all those who had no provisions of their own to go there. A great many miners took this advice. Although prices of certain articles rose by leaps and bounds, it is to the everlasting credit of the Alaska Commercial Company that they fulfilled all the orders placed with them during the early summer by the miners for their winter's supply without raising the prices to meet shortage values.

There were other concerns who did not follow that honourable course. A 50-lb. sack of flour was worth \$100, and men were glad to pay it. Candles \$1 each ; sugar, \$1 lb. ; champagne, \$60 per quart ; whiskey, \$16 per bottle ; beef \$3.50 per lb., but it was very scarce. In August, 1898, I sold one case of one dozen

tins of St. Charles cream to the Fairview Hotel for \$48, the cost price being \$5.50, but the peak in famine prices was \$740, which Robert Wood (our manager from Nelson, who had preceded me into the Klondike) paid for 100 lbs. of sluice nails—I should imagine a world record. Oatmeal, rolled oats, rice, dried fruits were all at a premium and sold at prices varying from one dollar to one dollar and a half per pound. Butter was a luxury (canned, of course).

Throughout '98 thousands of prospectors arrived in Dawson. The waterfront was packed with row boats, scows, rafts of logs, canoes and almost anything which would float. Tents were dotted around like flies over the hills behind the town; all along the waterfront, across the Yukon, above and below Dawson, then up and down both banks of the Klondike River for several miles and at the mouth of Bonanza Creek, prospectors had commenced to build themselves small cabins in readiness for the winter, in which to store their outfits.

I remember one peculiar dwelling built by some Maoris. It resembled a large beehive made of mud and sticks with a doorway about three feet high, the whole being about ten feet in diameter. Outside nearly all the cabins the prospectors had their names and the towns they had come from. At least two-thirds were Americans.

Hundreds of prospectors who, as soon as they arrived in Dawson got "cold feet," commenced to sell their

outfits. These were all arranged on the banks of the Yukon near the centre of the town. Each man had a pair of gold scales in which he weighed out the value of the articles sold.

Some of these so-called prospectors were using up their outfits of flour by baking bread and selling it at so much per loaf, for which there seemed to be a ready sale—the average price per loaf was 50 cents, or 2s.

Nearly every prospector seemed to have among his gear a copy of the Bible, Shakespeare, a rifle and a pair of gold scales. I remember running across one outfit belonging to a couple of young Englishmen which was exposed for sale on the river-bank. A remarkable collection! Wonderfully made clothes—so thick some of them that they would stand by themselves if placed on the ground. It resembled a Polar clothes exhibition—quite useless for a miner, of course. These lads also had an amazing stock of firearms—double-barrelled .450 Express rifles by well-known gunsmiths in London, with ammunition enough for five years, revolvers, shotguns—and a thousand and one luxuries. Hundreds of rifles were auctioned off on the waterfront in August '98. They fetched one dollar each when sold by the dozen. A great many of these steel barrels later on were taken down and used as steam points for thawing the gold-bearing gravels.

In addition to the few hotels which were opened in '98, each of which had a drinking bar, there were also

one or two famous saloons, dance halls, gambling dens and variety shows all in one. These buildings had two floors. On the ground level was the bar, the gambling-room, the dance hall and stage, while upstairs were a dozen or more bedrooms—and the orgies which took place in some of those bedrooms were beyond belief!

The saloons during the summer were open night and day for six months. Some small boys daily swept up the sawdust from the floor in front of the drinking bars and panned it out in a tub, making quite a nice bit of pocket-money! Some miners were very careless with their pokes of gold dust and spilled a good deal of it. Saloons were nearly always used as meeting-places where business was transacted, particularly during the winter months. And it was in the winter months when miners left the cold, dark cabins and rough fare and came to town and went into the warm and well-lighted saloons, where there was always music of some sort, dancing and women, that many a man went to pieces and squandered all he possessed.

The "Monte Carlo" was probably one of the most famous of the saloons. It would be interesting to know what the turnover amounted to in '98, '99 and 1900.

The dancing girls or women in the employ of these saloons were paid a certain salary and in addition were allowed a percentage on all drinks bought by their men friends. When a drink or bottle of wine was served a girl and her partner, she was given a small circular disc



All that was left of the Bank of B.N.A.—its tin safe.



Some of the damage done to other buildings by the big fire.

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The rare arrival of mail brings everyone to the Dawson Post Office.

with the amount of the percentage marked on it ; this she usually secreted in her stocking and later on that night, or next day, it was cashed in at the bar.

Prices were high. I remember walking into a saloon soon after my arrival in Dawson with the manager of the Alaska Commercial Company, who asked for an egg-nogg ; it cost \$4. Eggs were worth \$1 each at that time, and I believe there were only a dozen or two in the town.

Talking of eggs reminds me of a story told about " Swiftwater Willie," a well-known character in Dawson in '97, '98 and '99. He fell in love with a certain dance-hall girl, but his love was not reciprocated. The girl in question, however, was particularly fond of eggs and, in order to ingratiate himself with his lady, " Swiftwater Willie " cornered the egg market, which cost him a great deal of money. But as the lady was about to capitulate, someone arrived with a small shipment of eggs, which the lady herself purchased before " Swiftwater " could get hold of them !

" Swiftwater Willie " was famous for having married two sisters (the Lamont Sisters) and finally his Mother-in-law.

The Fairview Hotel was situated on First Avenue, facing the Yukon River and practically in the centre of the town. It was built by Miss Belinda Mulrooney and was one of the landmarks in the early days. As her name implies, Miss Mulrooney was Irish—distinctly so—short,

dark, angular, masculine, could swear like a trooper on occasion and was, generally speaking, "hard boiled." At one time she was supposed to have been a favourite of Big Alec Macdonald, "the King of the Klondike," but they fell out and Big Alec sued her for a certain sum of money which she claimed was given her for services rendered. This created a stir, even in the Klondike. Belinda owned a fraction of a bench claim on Cheechako Hill, close to our ground. She came up and took charge of it herself and could be seen standing about in a short skirt and knee-boots, directing operations and swearing at her employees. I don't think she made much out of her holding.

I saw a good deal of Belinda, as after the first year I nearly always put up at the "Fairview" and I must say she always saw that I was taken care of. Room No. 4 was known as my room, whenever I came to town. The hotel was a wooden structure of two floors. The walls of the bedroom were made of canvas nailed on wooden framework and ordinary wallpaper was pasted over this. Needless to say there was, practically speaking, no privacy whatever; except that the occupants of the rooms were unable to see each other, one might have been in the same room.

One night I returned to my room at the "Fairview" and, as I closed my door, I immediately heard a voice I knew quite well. It belonged to an Inspector of the R.N.W.M. Police—an immensely powerful man, about

6 feet 2 inches and weighing some 16 stone. The friend he was with evidently told him that I was in the next room, because I had no sooner got undressed than he called out to me to join them in a drink. But I was not having any ; I knew the hours he kept. So I called out that I was tired and was going to sleep, but he wouldn't leave me alone.

"Come on in, Army," he boomed. "I am celebrating the birth of a son, cabled to-day from Medicine Hat."

"No," I replied. "I am going to sleep and I'll have a drink with you to-morrow."

"You won't," he retorted. "If you don't come in by yourself, I'll come and fetch you."

"I am not coming," I insisted.

"Very well, I'm coming after you."

It was no use locking my door, even had it possessed a key, because he would have pulled it off its hinges without the slightest compunction. In he came and chucked me across his shoulder, though I wasn't exactly a feather-weight, being 6 feet 1 inch in height and weighing about 11 st. 4 lbs. He arrived with his prize and dropped me on the bed, where I was greeted by "The Oregon Mare," a nickname applied to a very handsome woman who was a well-known Dawson demi-mondaine. "The Oregon" was wearing a pink silk nightdress over which she had on the scarlet tunic of my friend, his Stetson hat, gauntlet gloves and she

held his riding-whip in her hand. She was standing up in the middle of the bed, and I must say presented a very striking figure !

In all gold rushes, gold and real estate booms, etc., where men congregate in large numbers and money is plentiful, it is inevitable that members of the underworld, the demi-mondaine, are attracted. They appear from heaven knows where ; no one sees them arrive, and no one knows whether they have escorts or brave the trails alone. I think they must come at night. In the first rush it always seems that the very worst and lowest type of harlot puts in an appearance, the cast-off creatures of the nearest big towns or settlements. They must " get in first " before more attractive sisters in distress arrive to deprive them of their living. This is exactly what happened in Dawson. The broken-down debris, as one might call them, of the Pacific Coast mining and fishing camps, such as Juneau, Ketchikan, Wrangel and a dozen more, came in over the Skagway trail and Chilcoot Pass. Their numbers were few in 1897, but 1898 saw a pretty heavy influx. They scattered themselves about Dawson, in log cabins, crossed the Klondike to what was called Louse Town, and even went over the Yukon to West Dawson. A good many, of course, " worked " for the saloons and the one combined variety-and-saloon theatre.

By 1899 someone suggested to the police that it was most undesirable that these women should be allowed to

spread themselves all over the town—they should be kept together in one designated spot. No sooner was this mooted than we were told it would be put into effect, and very shortly all the *known* ladies of easy virtue were herded together in what was called Hell's Half-Acre, situated almost in the centre of the town.

It was said that three well-known citizens had been given the "tip," had purchased the half-acre lot and had built the rabbit hutches in which the girls were made to live. There were about fifteen of these "hutches" on either side of a narrow roadway with a wooden sidewalk in front of each row of dwellings. Each hutch had two rooms, a bed-sitting-room and kitchen, and a *cache*, or outhouse. Exorbitant rents were charged these women and it was told me on good authority that each of the three principals interested in the building of Hell's Half-Acre drew \$800 per month as his share of the rents, etc. On top of this the local council appointed a medical man to inspect the "hutches," including occupants, for which a year's salary of many thousands of dollars was paid.

It was a scandalous thing, but Hell's Half-Acre was one of the sights of Dawson to those morbidly inclined, but to frontiersmen, miners, prospectors and the like, the sight was nothing new, although in Dawson very little effort had been taken to disguise the business, nor was it possible to hide it owing to the peculiar nature of the town site.

On the door of each "hutch" was painted the Christian name or *nom-de-guerre* of the occupant. In some cases there were two girls in one "hutch." The bed-sitting-room in each case was in the room facing the sidewalk and if the occupant was not otherwise engaged, the window-blind would be up and the fairy inside would be seen reclining on a bed or divan very scantily attired and using every blandishment to entice inquisitive men to enter. The miners and others would take a look at all the "samples" and then decide on a selection. I have seen as many as eight miners waiting in a queue outside one girl's "hutch."

The nationality of these girls was mostly French, American and Belgian. Some of them left Dawson with a great deal of money, some married, some died—and some killed themselves.

What a gigantic gamble life was ! Apart from Hell's Half-Acre, innumerable deals in real estate brought fortunes, greater than many a prospector ever touched. I had a little lucky experience myself.

Wood, who had preceded me and was my chief until I was put in sole control in '99, had purchased a 60 feet by 26 feet lot and log cabin on Front Street. It was just a bare barn, 16 feet by 18 feet, with no furniture of any sort and, until I reached Dawson, there was no stove in it. He paid the very large sum of \$1250 for the lot. I recollect, by the way, when I went to the Government Office for the deeds of assignment, I

found the transfer from the original owner was written on a small brown piece of wood which had been smoothed off with a pocket-knife. There was a hole in one end and a loop of string through it so that it could be "filed" in the office by hanging it on a nail. Many records were written on pieces of wood, as during the winter of '97-'98 no writing material was to be had in Dawson, even the Government Office had run out of supplies.

We used the cabin on the rarest occasion and it was utilised mainly for stores. In 1899 the Alaska Exploration Company purchased a large lot adjoining and erected two big warehouses in which to keep their supplies as general merchants.

Just about that time our London Office had been in communication with me concerning the installation of a brewery. The A.E. Company heard of this and were evidently afraid of fire. Since Insurance rates in Dawson were prohibitive, negotiations were started by the Alaska Company, for the purchase of our cabin and lot through a third party. My terms were \$10,000. This was, of course, an enormous price, although lots in Dawson were bringing fabulous sums, if they were "close in." After a considerable amount of negotiation the A.E. Company agreed to pay the \$10,000 if I would accept it in commercial gold dust, which meant low-grade mixture from all the producing creeks. I asked to see a sample, which contained quite a visible

amount of magnetic black sand ; this, of course, was mixed with the gold dust on purpose and was really a form of robbery. I know mine owners and others who deliberately mixed about an eight to a quarter of black sand with clean gold dust with which to pay wages—and I must admit that no one used clean gold dust when doing business with shopkeepers.

Finally I considered that if my \$10,000 in low grade would yield me about \$8000 in fine gold dust, I should have brought off a very handsome deal, so I accepted, took it to the Bank to be melted and assayed and it returned me \$8400, which for an investment of \$1250 wasn't so bad—700 per cent ! A few years later this lot was practically unsaleable ; a few dollars would have bought it. The A.E. Company made no use of it at all.

The term " commercial dust," by the way, was applied to gold dust which was used commercially in Dawson when paying one's bills. This system started in a small way amongst the Jew traders and developed gradually until after a few years it became so bad that it really was the cause of eliminating gold dust as legal tender. One could even go to the local Bank and purchase commercial dust in exchange for clean dust. The commercial dust was worth about \$11 per ounce, as against \$16, so that in exchanging the commercial stuff at \$11 with \$16 dust, one made a profit of \$5 per ounce. Many shopkeepers were also swindled by people

giving them brass filings mixed with the gold dust, and one shopkeeper (a woman) was taken in with brass nuggets. These she displayed in a small glass case in her window as a warning to others.

There was, of course, a great deal of real gambling—roulette, poker, faro, etc. It went on continually by day and night. It was nothing unusual for a party to dance, drink and gamble without a break in one saloon over a period of forty-eight hours. And a thousand stories could be told of high wagers won and lost.

I recall a few cases which I knew personally. One concerns E. Mizner, an Irish Jew and local manager for a short time of the Alaska Commercial Company of Dawson. Mizner was tall, dark hair turning grey, blue eyes, closely cropped moustache and, as a rule, looked upon as one of the meanest men of his class in Dawson. One night, to the astonishment of all his friends, the word went round that he was "playing big money" at roulette in the Opera House saloon. Whenever it was known that big money was being played an extra crowd always found its way to the scene, and when any punter happened to be winning heavily one would always see the smaller fry following the winning man's luck and placing small bets on the same combinations.

On this particular night Mizner was having bad luck. When he found he was down several thousand dollars, he lost his head and tried to get back his losses by plunging, usually a fatal thing to do when a man is

out of luck. Drinks were always given free by the management to any man who was playing big money, the liquor as a rule being champagne. Mizner had had more than he usually took, and this, coupled with the losses, only helped to drive discretion away. From a stake of \$50 he increased to hundreds, there were moments when he might have broken the bank if his bet had won. He was playing against a wheel with two Zeros and the game was crooked as well—the gambler-owners had some means of manipulating the wheel to their own advantage.

Mizner went from bad to worse, before long he was \$10,000 down, then \$15,000 and knowing who he was, the management let him play on credit. At \$15,000 down he made four bets of \$1000 each, taking a long shot on the dozens square. Not one of them came off and Mizner quit a loser of \$19,000. The episode lost him his job.

Another experience on a smaller scale was of a young American miner from the state of Washington. He had worked for me for about eighteen months and had saved nearly all his wages, which I kept for him in my safe. When the month of September came along he had in gold dust \$3200 and decided to leave Dawson, proceed to his native state and purchase a farm. I gave him his money and wished him good-bye and off he went down the trail. In forty-eight hours the lad was back again, having lost every cent at the roulette table

in Dawson. He said he tried to double his money. He seemed quite cheerful over it all so I gave him back his job and he started to amass another "grub stake."

There existed a certain gang of men in Dawson, mostly professional and business men, who habitually met and played a big game of poker. They had no limit and as much as \$5000 was won and lost on one hand.

Even Government employees were caught up in the maelstrom of wild hilarity. It was no unusual event to see them in one of the boxes at a dance-hall with scantily-clad professional girls sitting on their laps drinking and joking uproariously.

One realised, to be sure, that in a community of such mushroom growth there was bound to be a period of effervescence before something like order was established. Few men in authority—with the notable exception of Colonel Sam Steele of the Police, a splendid and efficient officer—had experience of the type of men who make up a mining camp. Organised authority during its growing-pains was so poorly equipped that it even ran out of such an essential commodity as paper. For a time there was no means of keeping records, etc., except on bits of wood and anything which could be found that could be written on.

It was not to be wondered at that the miners eventually rose up in arms. Irritated almost beyond bearance they nearly killed one official and then the more sober-

minded among them got together to find redress. A miners' association was formed in Dawson in 1898 and meetings were held on all the principal gold-bearing creeks. It is interesting to look back on one of the notices which I have kept ever since. Here it is.

Those early efforts to secure fairness resulted in three men being chosen to go to Ottawa to place facts before the Prime Minister. That was the start of wiser administration.

MINERS' ASSOCIATION

A meeting will be held in the Presbyterian
church, Grand Forks on

TUESDAY EVENING DEC. 6th,
at 7:30 p. m. 1898

**All miners whether members or not are
requested to be present.**

The Objects of the Association are:

1. To secure pure administration.
2. To obtain abolition of royalty and all unjust taxation.
3. To obtain abolition of the reservation of ten claims and fractions to the government.
4. To secure mining regulations suitable to the country.
5. To impress upon the government the necessity of encouraging the miner and prospector.

Also all other matters which pertain to the interest of the miner.

D. MCGREGOR,

SECRETARY.

CHAPTER V

GREENHORN HILL

THIS is the sort of astounding incident that was common in the early days of the Rush.

Late in the summer of 1897 a greenhorn was wending his way up Eldorado Creek looking for work or a mine, when he stopped and spoke to some miners who were talking together on No. 18 Eldorado. He was, indeed, the most simple of greenhorns for he calmly asked those miners whether they could tell him, please, where he could stake a rich claim—rather an equivalent to the innocent girl who asked her sporting boy friend to put something on the next *winner* for her!

The miners managed to keep straight faces and one of them replied apparently in all seriousness:

“Right on top of the hill yonder, sonny,” and he pointed to what was to be known later as French Hill—a desolate, untouched spot. It was, of course, intended as a joke—rather a cruel joke—for in the practised prospector’s opinion that greenhorn was being directed to the least likely spot in all the Klondike.

The greenhorn took the information literally, thanked the miner and climbed the hill. He sank a shaft, much to the amusement of the old-timers, and almost

immediately struck bedrock and a small amount of gold. He then abandoned his shaft and commenced to drive a tunnel into the hill on bedrock. Not only did he strike very rich pay indeed, but he uncovered what was afterwards known as the famous "white quartz drift of the Dawson series," which extended in an almost unbroken line from French Hill to Lovett Gulch, where it crossed Bonanza and came out in the Klondike Valley. This deposit up on the benches was rich wherever it was located with few exceptions !

In the language of the Indian there is a word meaning Greenhorn—Cheechako. Though the strike referred to was on French Hill, a neighbouring rise was called Cheechako Hill, and it was there that I was to work some of the richest bench claims in the Klondike. Those claims simply swarmed with nuggets. I remember well the day I washed one pan which yielded \$302.

I had been notified from London to keep my eyes open for any good property which might be purchased cheaply for cash, and that R. W. Wood would be returning with a credit of some £5000 or £6000 in case our summer clean-up should be a poor one.

The general experience among mining men is that the poor prospector rarely, if ever, makes any "real" money out of his claims ; it nearly always falls to the lot of the mining engineer or the man with, or who represents, money, to pick up the bargains in valuable mining properties. At the same time these men do

occasionally buy bad properties, so that there *are* times when the old prospector scores.

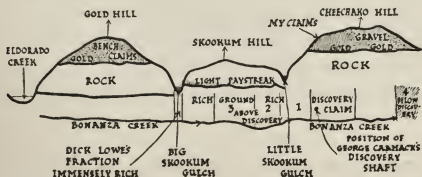
Early in the spring I had noticed some men working on the hill above the Creek Valley and behind my cabin. I saw that the material, gravel or whatever it was that was being excavated was white, so one day I climbed up, took a look about me, and was much interested to find that some prospectors had staked what were known as Bench Claims, the dimensions each being 100 feet by 100 feet, very small claims that would require to be rich to pay for successful working at that time. The white material was white quartz clay and was afterwards known as the famous white quartz drift channel of the Bonanza Valley ; a channel immensely rich in many places.

The hill was Cheechako Hill.

It was noticeable that several short tunnels were being driven into this white channel from rim bedrock which had been located ; also I noticed that in two instances small horizontal steam boilers were in operation and that, instead of using our original method of thawing the frozen ground from the heat of wood fires, these "Cheechakos" were trying a new method. Steam pipes were connected to the boiler and at the end of the iron pipe flexible hose was connected with steel points which were driven slowly into the face of the frozen gravel as they thawed the ground in front of them. These steel pipes or points were about five or six feet in

length and when they had been driven in the full distance, they were allowed to "sweat" for seven or eight hours, by which means several tons of gravel was thawed. Several years later, by the way, it was discovered that cold water injected through these points under pressure was just as effective as steam and much cheaper.

With regard to what values were being obtained, I found the Cheechakos very reticent. I gathered, however, that they were all obtaining fairly good prospects. I walked all along the rim for about half a mile northwards, until I came to the spot where Cheechako Hill commenced; here the formation had been intersected by a water-course—known as "Little Skookum Gulch"—entering Bonanza Creek at right angles. North of Little Skookum Gulch the gravel deposits had been faulted or eroded considerably below the level of Cheechako and Gold Hills. The faulted area was known as Skookum Hill and as I am speaking of one of the richest areas in the history of the Klondike I have drawn herewith a rough outline of the formation described.



Having, as already stated, walked round to the north end of Cheechako Hill, marked thus (X), I noticed that two men were working in a narrow but well-timbered tunnel and had quite a pile of the white quartz drift on a dump. With a good deal of diffidence, I opened a conversation with them. I told them who I was and where I was working, and they said they knew me by sight. I explained that I was on the look out for some bench claims and would purchase for cash anything I thought suitable. Did they wish to contemplate a sale? If so, what sort of pay were they getting?

The two men held a conversation for a short time, and then came back and one said: "My partner and I are prepared to negotiate the sale of our two claims, but we must tell you that we have received a communication ordering us to leave our claims, saying we are not entitled to them on the ground that they had been staked prior to our application and grant. We replied that it would only be over our dead bodies we would yield our property, but this is how the matter stands at the moment."

After having looked at the official grants for their claims and made an examination of the stakes and their official survey plan, I felt quite safe in conducting negotiations as no one would ever dare attempt to bluff my Company off their property.

The claims in question were two 100 feet by 100 feet bench claims known as the Atkinson and Clemenson,



What Front Street, Dawson, looked like during the first days of the historic rush.



THE NEW YORK
LIBRARY

Bonanza Creek's largest nugget—discovered by the Author
—weight $64\frac{1}{4}$ ozs.

the former being an American coal-miner from Tacoma, Washington State, and the latter a Dane who had been in the U.S. for a good many years.

Their price was \$25,000 (£5000) for the two claims which included their cabin, tools, etc.

Permission was, of course, given me to investigate the work they had done and thoroughly to test the gravel by means of panning.

They had driven a tunnel directly into the hill—following bedrock—for a distance of 82 feet by 5 feet in width and 6 feet high. Taking one of my men, Ralph Sharp, with me and our own gold pans, picks and shovels, we spent two days in testing along each side of the tunnel every 3 feet and all across the face from bedrock to a height of 4 feet. The prospects taken from the bedrock were placed in separate sacks from those obtained higher up in the gravel. When we had filled as many sacks as we could handle, they were carried down to my cabin and panned out in warm water. The tests from the gravel taken from bedrock were very satisfactory, giving the very high average of 53 cents to the pan; the upper gravel contained negligible results.

I then asked permission to try a few samples from the dump. The two owners advised me that they had taken no pans from the dump at all—what little panning they did was from samples taken from the face of their tunnel as it progressed. The samples were duly obtained from the dump and to my amazement the average was \$2.40

to the pan—and only light pans at that ! Unless the dump had been “salted,” which I considered unlikely, and unless the gravel which had been worked was just a local rich deposit, it would appear that the Atkinson and Clemenson claims gave promise of being very rich indeed.

I, of course, did not disclose these values to the owners—but I estimated the dump to be worth about \$7000 and did my best to have it included in the terms of sale.

“No,” said they, “we want to retain our small dump as it represents a lot of hard work and we are very anxious and interested to see just what gold it will yield.”

While we were discussing the purchase price Atkinson remarked : “Come into our cabin ; I have something to show you.”

We went inside and he produced something wrapped up in a piece of soft leather. On this being undone there was revealed a beautiful nugget of solid gold which weighed slightly over nine ounces and was valued at \$140.

They had seen it sticking in the clay while driving their tunnel. I thought to myself that where there was one of these there would be more.

After much beating about the bush, the final purchase price was fixed at \$22,500 cash and I was given an option at this figure for one week for a deposit of \$1000. It was a lot of money to risk, but I knew if this upper

bench channel should prove to be as rich as the deposits in the Creek bed the thing would be a gift.

My only doubt was whether the pay would be found in small patches only, which was quite possible. I resolved to take the chance.

Wood arrived in over the ice two days after my negotiations with Atkinson and Clemenson and, having explained what had taken place and the prospects realised, he endorsed my action and the claims were duly purchased. It was fortunate the deal was arranged before the two men started to sluice up their small dump, otherwise double the sum would have been refused. They were struck almost dumb with the richness of their handful of white gravel ; it produced nearly \$12,000 and quite a large number of beautiful nuggets. The gold was very coarse and a very bright yellow in colour.

We arranged to continue driving the tunnel which had been commenced by the late owners and when this had reached a certain point we put in a cross-cut. I mention this latter fact because it had a very important bearing on the success of our new venture.

We hired four good miners almost immediately after the purchase of the property to carry on with the tunnel and, in addition, two men to operate a " rocker " to test the value of the gravel as the work proceeded.

The first day that our one rocker was put in operation—one man " rocking " and one man bringing pans of

gravel from the tunnel—the clean-up for five and a half hours' work produced the marvellous return of \$558—nearly all very coarse gold.

Only the richest claims on Eldorado could beat this.

We were greatly pleased with ourselves and the purchase price now began to look very cheap. Until we could make arrangements for sluicing, we put six "rockers" in operation and returns continued to be very rich. Like many an alluvial claim high values depended a good deal on the nature of the bedrock—whether it was smooth or rough, level or undulating. On Cheechako Hill and elsewhere in the Klondike the best results were nearly always to be found on a rising bedrock at a point near the crest, either on the front or reverse slope or on both.

Gold was very rarely found in a depression on bedrock or in pot-holes. There were two exceptions to this rule in our new claims. In both instances we came across pot-holes in bedrock containing crushed white quartz cubes averaging about one and a quarter inches in diameter. Both these small pot-holes were literally filled with gold, mixed with magnetic and grey sand—no gold was found adhering to any of the quartz cubes. The formation of the bedrock was micaceous and graphitic schist intersected with small veins of hard white "Bull quartz." The cubes of quartz in these pot-holes looked exactly as though they had been broken by hand to a set design. It was most uncanny. One of them was

particularly rich. Not much larger than a big soup tureen, we panned out \$1800—£360.

We decided to continue driving the original tunnel to the back boundary of the two claims and when about half-way a main cross-cut would be driven to prospect the entire breadth of the property. As soon as the main tunnel was completed it was our intention to intersect on bedrock every eight feet, and when each one of these cuts reached the boundary the men would start to excavate the gravel from the far end of this tunnel and bring the pillars forward, which would allow the roof of the excavated area to cave in behind them.

We laid down wooden rails in the main tunnel and had wooden ore cars made in Dawson. We used wooden wheels flanged with strap iron until we were able to find something more durable.

Our one great difficulty was to obtain water for sluicing. It was the handicap all miners were faced with who operated bench claims. Even down in the Creek Valley, water was scarce, except in the spring, and the clearing away of all the timber on the surrounding hills for mining purposes caused the drying up of springs early in the year.

We could always get enough water to operate two or three "rockers" but when our claims were being worked on a fairly large scale the rocking system could no longer be economically applied. We wanted to put a fair head of water up on the hill so that our sluice boxes

could be placed near the entrance of our tunnel which would give us ample "face" for our tailings which could be cribbed up on the lower slopes of the hill, a section of ground for this purpose having been purchased. George Carmack, the discoverer of the Klondike, was operating his Discovery claim immediately below us and allowed us to run a lot of our tailings on to a section of his claim which had been mined out. Carmack was always a good friend to me and I found him to be a very fine specimen of pioneer and frontiersman who would always play the game of give and take.

The only plan we could devise was to install a small plant down in Bonanza Creek and pump the water on to the hill for sluicing purposes. I will not go into details of the organisation but the machinery was duly installed and sluicing by this method was carried on until the freeze up in September.

As our tunnel progressed we ran into quite a large area of unfrozen gravel, which was most unusual and unexpected. While this was an advantage in one way—rapid progress could be made with the mining of the gravel—it was a great disadvantage in another because it was necessary to timber every foot of this thawed ground or the roof would have fallen. This timbering was very expensive as props were scarce and large quantities were required.

Working slowly to the back boundary, we met with rich prospects almost entirely the whole way—only in

the depressions of the undulating bedrock did we run out of pay. The gold was coarse and we procured some very nice nuggets weighing round about four ounces or valued at \$50 to \$60. At one spot, on rising bedrock, we came across a nest of fair sized boulders resting on white clay (quartz). Collected under and all about these boulders we found a miniature jeweller's shop.

By the aid of our miner's candle and the naked eye, coarse gold and nuggets appeared nearly every time we scratched into the clay with the steel points of our candlesticks. The gold was all about the same coarseness—nuggets valued at from \$5 to \$15. It was a wonderful sight! I sent for a pan and scratched out the clay for a width of about two feet. The gold obtained was worth \$128.

The gravel was so rich at this time that we cleaned up our two sluice boxes every night. And what a sight it was when we removed the wooden riffles in the largest or head box! There was literally a yellow carpet of gold. When the sand and fine gravel was scraped up it was simply a mass of yellow nuggets, and coarse and medium gold dust.

From now onwards it kept me busy for several hours per day cleaning, drying and weighing all the dust. It interested me at first, but when it became a daily job for months I began to treat gold dust as so much gravel! It seemed to lose all significance as a precious metal. Had I spent my time in counting the value of all this

gold in notes it would have helped me more vividly to realise what a rich property we had, but the old saying : " familiarity breeds contempt," certainly applied to me after I had been handling gold dust for several months.

News of our rich strike soon spread over the Creeks. We paid high wages for experienced miners ; one dollar per hour for miners for a ten-hours' day. A foreman received \$15 per day (£3). It was not long before we had quite a large number of men camped in or near our claims waiting to get a job with us. Men liked working in the rich claims when gold was visible.

I know for a fact that one or two very fine nuggets found their way from my property to the local saloons without passing through my office accounts. One beautiful nugget worth \$158 was sold to a jeweller in Dawson by one of my miners—the information was given me in the strictest confidence. When one has about fifty or sixty men all working in narrow tunnels, and some of them in rich ground, it is impossible to watch them all and in consequence many nuggets go astray. We caught three miners stealing coarse gold and nuggets from the sluice boxes—and dealt with them !

A great many visitors came to the mine with a request to see samples of our dust and nuggets ; some of our friends were taken into the mine where one could usually find some spot with coarse gold and nuggets visible to the eye if one scratched about in the clay or bedrock for a few minutes. Jewellers also arrived from

Dawson to purchase coarse gold and small nuggets to be made into jewellery of all sorts in vogue about this time—nugget cuff-links, chains, bracelets, rings, charms, etc.

This reminds me of an incident very typical of the place and the period. A miner owning a very rich claim on Eldorado Creek became so enamoured of a well-known *demi-mondaine*, by name Cad Wilson, that he presented her with a belt made of nuggets of all sizes and shapes with a large fastening studded with diamonds. This belt was on view in Dawson for many weeks and, of course, was more suitable for a prize-ring trophy than anything else. I believe Cad Wilson sold the belt before leaving Dawson and the nuggets went into the melting-pot.

But to return to our treasure-house. It was our intention to open up the two claims by means of a main tunnel to the back boundary and a main cross-cut tunnel east and west. As soon as my main passage reached a point about midway in the two claims the cross-cut was started east and west. After driving the former about 50 feet my foreman came and told me that some pieces of charred wood had dropped down from the roof. This seemed most mysterious. I immediately investigated the occurrence and we dislodged more burnt sticks as well as a lot of loose gravel, so much so that we had to put in a hurried "set" of timbers. There was only one solution—that the burnt sticks must come

from the bottom of an old shaft, but I knew there were no old shafts on either of my claims.

"Let us go on the surface and have a look round," I said to the foreman.

This we did, and there on an adjoining claim was an old shaft which had caved in. But surely this could not be the shaft we had encountered! If so, our tunnel was well over our boundary-line and a miscalculation must have been made in the survey by our surveyor in Dawson! Immediately I set to work with my foreman to check the survey and it was only too true—we had crossed our boundary-line!

Here was a pretty quandary, especially as even while we were checking the survey one of the miners informed us that we must be in very rich ground as gold was visible right across the face on bedrock! Taking a gold-pan and miner's candlestick I went into the tunnel and commenced to scratch about. The result was marvellous. Gold was visible everywhere—lumps of it! I told the foreman to hold his candle for me to see the face and I proceeded to take a pan all along the bedrock.

It was like picking raisins out of a plum pudding.

Having filled my pan I instructed the foreman that only the most reliable men must be put to work in this valuable tunnel. When the pan had been half-washed it appeared to be half gold dust and nuggets. When washed and weighed it contained \$302—worthy of the richest claims on Eldorado Creek! It was a wonderful

sight : there was no large nugget but numbers of pieces about the size of hazel nuts ! I preserved the pan in a special bottle which was later taken to London and exhibited in Regent Street in the window of the Goldsmiths' and Silversmiths' shop.

We had struck an immensely rich deposit, but in another man's claim !

Particular care was taken you may be sure that none of my men should know that we were over our line and to maintain this I carried on with the tunnel very slowly.

My most urgent need was to locate the owner of the adjacent—known as the McDonald—claim and if possible to purchase it.

At the Gold Commissioner's office I found the claim was of " good standing " which meant that the necessary representation work had been done and that the title to the claim was in order. I also discovered that the claim was still owned by the man who staked it, one J. M. McDonald, but no one seemed to know his whereabouts. I engaged two trustworthy friends to carry on with the inquiries and to do their utmost to trace the missing man.

Shortly after returning to the mine I was very gratified to hear reliable information had been received that McDonald had gone to the Forty Mile Camp. This was an old mining district 60 miles north of Dawson on the Yukon River. On receipt of the news I sent one of my

friends to this camp with a request to McDonald to return to Dawson as someone wished to purchase his claim on Cheechako Hill.

My friend duly located the owner and returned with him to Dawson and thence to see me on Cheechako Hill.

McDonald turned out to be a Scotsman, his age being somewhere about sixty-five or sixty-eight. He was tall, gaunt, with a long beard turning grey, hair almost on his shoulders, thin aquiline nose, eyes deep set, dark and small. He was dressed in well-worn mining clothes and wearing an old felt hat.

He told me that he had sunk one shaft on his claim to bedrock and found no prospects which would warrant his going on with the work. So, since he had exhausted his money in Dawson, he returned to Forty Mile and went on working a claim he owned there from which he could always be sure of taking out enough for a "grub stake." Poor old boy—he *thought* the bottom of his shaft was on bedrock when he was six feet *above* it as the burnt embers proved in the roof of my tunnel. If he had sunk another six feet, his shaft would have landed him on one of the richest spots on the whole of Cheechako Hill. Such is the luck of mining !

I told McDonald that we wanted to buy his claim so that we could run a tunnel through it to give us a right of way and facilities for taking out pay gravel on the Bonanza Creek side of Cheechako Hill where we contemplated putting in a gravity tramway.

It was explained to him that if he decided to hold his claim and work it he would require to have rich gravel to pay expenses ; water for sluicing was hard to obtain and that we owned and had been using all that was available. He sought permission to go into my tunnels and have a look around, but I refused, although he could not have told that we were over his line without making an accurate survey.

Finally McDonald said :

“ I will sell.”

He had hardly spoken at all since his arrival and seemed to be very distrustful of everybody and everything.

“ Well,” I said, “ you must name your price.”

“ You must say what you will give me,” he replied.

“ All right,” I said. “ I’ll offer you \$1000 cash and that’s a good price.”

He wouldn’t accept this figure. He said he wanted enough money to take him out of the country as he was getting an old man and the winters were cold and long and food was very dear. After a considerable amount of “ haggling ” the old man said :

“ I will sell for \$4000.”

I explained that this was a very heavy price to pay for an almost abandoned claim without any prospects, but that if that was his bottom figure I would give him \$1000 cash and the balance in three months’ time. After some demur he accepted my terms. I had

prepared the necessary transfer papers to avoid delay should he come to terms. So we went to my office, filled in the terms and I drew a cheque for \$1000, which McDonald was not over-pleased to accept. He wanted actual money, but I told him my cheque was perfectly good.

The final handing-over of the money and deed was amusing. I do not know if it is the custom in the Highlands of Scotland or in Nova Scotia (where McDonald spent his youth) but the procedure was as follows: I held out my cheque in my left hand and McDonald held out the agreement for sale in his left hand. McDonald then grasped the cheque in his right hand and I did the same to the deeds with my right. We remained posed like this for a second and we then each took what belonged to us and the claim passed into my hands, pending final payment. Poor old McDonald, if he had only sunk his shaft another six feet he would have been a rich man. I hope he never found out what a rich property he had owned.

Greenhorn forsooth!

We continued mining out the rich pay and "rocking" the gravel by hand. It was so rich that we made the entire purchase price in five days, and as I thought it was unfair to keep the old man waiting three months for his final payment of \$3000, I instructed the Manager of the Bank of B.N.A. to pay this amount and collect the title deeds for me, which he did.

The very rich pay in the McDonald claim extended for a long distance in the tunnel and on each side of it. Wherever we encountered what was known as high bedrock we always found gold. It may be said that two-thirds of McDonald's claim was very rich.

All through the summer of 1899 we prospected the Atkinson and Clemenson claims, driving tunnels and cross-cuts and sluicing the pay gravel in two boxes with water we pumped out of Bonanza Creek, which during the hot weather only produced a very small volume—what miners term “one head” of water. There is no doubt we lost a considerable percentage of gold in the “tailings.” The further we mined into the hill the richer it became.

More readily to visualise the value of this property it might interest any “old timer” or anyone with some knowledge of gold-mining to read the actual returns or “clean up” for two twelve-foot sluice boxes using a small head of water from June 25th to July 10th, 1899.

1899.				\$
June 25	18 ozs. gold dust	.	.	302
„ 26	42 „ „	.	.	682
„ 27	55 „ „	.	.	886
„ 28	50 „ „	.	.	807
„ 29	41 „ „	.	.	670
„ 30	25 „ „	.	.	405
July 1	56 „ „	.	.	907
„ 4	62 „ „	.	.	992

1899						\$
July	5	90	ozs.	gold dust	.	1309
"	6	56	"	"	.	900
"	7	47	"	"	.	759
"	8	48	"	"	.	771
"	10	100	"	"	.	1600
						<hr/>
						\$10,990
						<hr/>

or roughly £2200 in thirteen days. Richer ground than that was encountered during the next month, August. Here is another record from the cash book I kept at the time :

1899.						\$
Aug.	2	4	days	72	ozs.	1153
"	5	3	"	72	"	1153
"	9	4	"	275	"	4408
"	12	3	"	189	"	3025
"	14	2	"	88	"	1409
"	16	2	"	99	"	1585
"	20	4	"	304	"	4876
"	23	3	"	201	"	3221
"	26	3	"	215	"	3443
						<hr/>
						\$24,273
						<hr/>

This total was roughly £5000 because the gold dust when the final assay returns were received from San Francisco was valued at \$16.60 per fine ounce. These

claims of ours even in such a remarkably productive district must certainly have ranked as one of the richest bench claims in the Klondike—if not *the* richest.

It was impossible to find out from miners and operators exactly what their ground was producing in the way of gold dust. One knew more or less whether certain claims were rich or low grade, but that was all. The reason for all this secrecy was occasioned by the imposition of a Government Royalty of 10 per cent on the gross output, a most iniquitous tax and one which nearly caused a mutiny in the camp. It was just touch and go—all arrangements had been made by the miners to take over the country. While the tax was the law, no man would breathe a word regarding the output of his claim simply because they all furnished inaccurate returns to the tax collector. I do not believe more than one-tenth part of the correct tax was ever recovered from individual miners, and I don't blame them. The operating expenses were enormous at that period, and there is, at least, one known case on record where a miner after paying all his expenses was compelled to borrow money to pay his Royalty !

A great many foolish miners attempted to evade the payment of this Royalty by smuggling their gold dust out of the country. This it was difficult to do as there was a Customs office at the summit of the White Pass presided over by U.S. officials and R.N.W. Mounted Police. Any miner or other person travelling by train

or on foot was searched and if gold dust was discovered it was confiscated.

One woman attempted to smuggle out a small "poke" of dust wrapped up in the coil of her back hair, but she was spotted. Another miner going over the White Pass on foot tried to smuggle \$3000 worth of gold dust in his roll of blankets. This was confiscated and the man (an Italian miner) nearly went raving mad.

The woman who was attached to the N.W.M. Police at Whitehorse for the purpose of searching females for gold dust was a very well-known character throughout the Upper Yukon. Her name was Kate Ryan. She was about thirty years of age, big, strong, healthy and a handsome-looking woman, always full of fun off duty, but amazingly keen on her job, much to the annoyance of many travellers. One day I asked her what she did when she searched the women, how she went about her job, and her reply was: "Sure, and if I told you that you'd want the job yourself!"

Another rich clean-up from the McDonald Claim gave the following return:

						\$
Sept.	2	145	ozs.	3	days	2335
"	6	225	"	4	"	3606
"	10	233	"	.	.	3740
"	14	149	"	.	.	2404
"	18	211	"	1	day	3387
"	22	164	"	.	.	2624
						<hr/>
						\$18,096
						<hr/>

This was exceedingly good ground as can be imagined. We obtained roughly £3600 in twenty-two days, using crude methods of sluicing and there is no doubt that we were being robbed of many nuggets by our miners.

In August an opportunity presented itself of purchasing more claims adjoining our property. These were known as the Britt Clark and Ward. The Britt and Ward were fractions, that is to say they were not full claims of 100 feet by 100 feet. We were of the opinion that all three of these claims were off the pay streak, but that they would be useful to us for the Surface rights alone even if they did not contain gold in payable quantities.

The owner of the Clark claim had had a very bad go of scurvy in the mouth during the previous winter and all his teeth had dropped out and he was in the habit of carrying them in his trousers pockets and taking out a handful of them frequently to show his friends. He was, poor devil, anxious to go outside and get something done to his gums and finding little pay in his claim he sold it to us for \$800. We bought the Britt claim for \$500 and the Ward for \$1500.

We struck some very good pay in the Ward claim and a small area of coarse gold in both the Britt and Clark. In the latter we found two seams of blue clay about 5 feet above bedrock which contained coarse gold. The original owners had overlooked this deposit by continually taking their panning tests on bedrock, because

as a rule the upper gravels in these benches contained no gold at all. It was more or less a fluke that we located it in this clay streak. It occurred like this.

Directly after the purchase was completed, I gave orders to my foreman to put a sluice box in position close to the dump of gravel which had been taken out of this tunnel by Clark just to see if it contained any values at all. One man shovelled into this box for one day using a small head of water and when the stream was shut off in the evening I happened to be poking about in the riffles with my fingers and to my astonishment there appeared many nice nuggets. This was exciting. There must be a paystreak somewhere in the tunnel which had been overlooked by Clark. For two days we panned all along the bedrock at the sides of the tunnel and in the face without striking any remarkable pay, certainly no nuggets. As a last resort we then started panning the upper gravels and in these streaks of blue clay we unearthed our coarse gold. The small dump of gravel taken out by Clark yielded \$2800 which was sluiced up in three days and which he had considered worthless.

Again we were lucky !

CHAPTER VI

LUCK OF THE GAME

WE were constantly hearing stories of big finds. A man would come into Dawson, make for the Monte Carlo, the Fairview or another of the saloons and tell of a fortune he had found, proceeding immediately to start squandering it by lavish hospitality to all and sundry. Gold was heady stuff. Not many of those old-timers who almost overnight sprang from the level of labourers to dollar millionaires came outside with their wealth intact—and those that did usually managed to let it run through their fingers like the dust it was.

Writing of lucky strikes recalls the case of the Scouse Brothers, whom I knew in '98. There were three of them—Jack, Bill and John—and they were Scotsmen who, previous to the Klondike strike, had been working in the Dunsmuir coal-mines on Vancouver Island.

In passing—and truly in keeping with this matter of mining luck—it may interest my readers to know that those mines, among the biggest coal-fields on the Pacific Coast, were discovered by an uneducated coal-miner—John Dunsmuir. The man amassed a fortune, built a railway from Nanaimo (the place of his discovery) to

Victoria, and eventually became Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia. His only son—and here's that inevitable reverse of the medal—went down with the *Lusitania*.

Bill Scouse had been a mine foreman for Dunsmuir, but when his brothers went prospecting, Bill felt the call and joined them. They were in the Klondike up in the Forty Mile country before Carmack's discovery. As soon as the news of the strike thrilled through the country, the Scouse trio abandoned their search and stampeded for Dawson. They were too late, however, to stake on Bonanza so they went up Eldorado Creek and pegged out Numbers 14, 15 and 16. At that time a miner was allowed to stake only one claim in each district. After marking out these three claims, the brothers decided that in order not to have too many eggs in one basket they could abandon Number 16 and in its place mark a claim on Adams Gulch, a tributary of Bonanza Creek coming in at 6 Below Discovery. This was a gulch which looked very favourable for gold.

Now here's the luck of the game. That Number 16, which the brothers abandoned in favour of Adams Gulch, was taken up by an American from Seattle named Lippy and out of it he made over a million dollars—and kept them !

All the same, the Scouse boys had nothing to grumble about. As soon as their claims had been recorded they sank a shaft on Number 14. The gravel was frozen

and they had to thaw their way down with wood fires. They soon erected their wooden windlass and bucket and slowly but surely descended. They obtained no gold at all until within about three feet of bedrock ; then a few colours appeared in the pans they washed at night in their cabin. At sixteen feet bedrock was reached.

Bill Scouse was on the windlass and Jack was down the shaft. The latter sent up a pretty heavy bucket of gravel, sand and clay from the bottom and when it reached Bill—and daylight—he looked down and his eyes nearly popped out of his head. The bucket seemed to be one mass of gold ! There were nuggets sticking about in the sand and gravel, and fine gold dust everywhere.

“ Say, Jack,” he shouted down the shaft in his excitement, “ what in the hell do you think you’ve sent up, the Bank of England ? ”

“ What’s up, have we struck it ? ” called back Jack from the depths.

“ Struck it ? ” said Bill. “ Come on up and have a look ; it’ll do your blooming eyes good ! ”

Up came Jack and soon the two brothers were gloating over their find and scratching about the bucket with their fingers. Gold was visible all through the gravel.

The other brother, John, was in the cabin, so they hurriedly arranged to give him a surprise. A couple of pans were filled from the bucket and, in order to hide any visible gold, they sprinkled some sand over the top

of each. These were then taken into the cabin and John Scouse was asked quite casually if he would pan them out in the tub kept for the purpose. He knew bedrock had been reached and if the claim was going to be any good the pay should be found now.

John started to pan and Bill and Jack pretended to be uninterested. He had taken only about three or four turns with the pan in the water when they saw him drop his face until his nose almost touched the stuff. Then he took hold of the candle (by the light of which he was panning) and gazed as though he couldn't believe his eyes.

"By the holy mackinaw, have I gone plum crazy or is this pan lousy with gold? It's *all* gold. Look, boys, for the Lord's sake and see if I'm daft!"

Then Bill and Jack told him they had seen the gold and wanted to surprise him in the same way that they had been surprised. When the two pans had been washed out they all three of them saw a sight which seemed to point to dreams of untold wealth. There was over \$400 in the two pans! Would it last? *Could* it? Or was this just a rich spot they had happened upon? You can imagine with what anxious eagerness they returned to that shaft.

As they drifted along on bedrock and cross-cut the claims they encountered immensely rich pay. And Number 15 was just as rich as Number 14. They were wealthy men!

Early in 1898 a representative of an English mining company arrived in Dawson looking for properties to float in London. The Scouse Brothers were offered an immense sum for their claims and this they accepted. Jack and Bill foolishly took the majority of the purchase price in shares, whereas John handled the cash and returned to England. Poor Bill and Jack made little or nothing out of their holdings, the profits being mostly swallowed up in mining costs and other expenses.

Bill and Jack Scouse were two of Nature's gentlemen. I saw a great deal of them in after years. Jack and I were shipwrecked together amongst other excitements.

Another story of a fortune throws a vivid light on the sort of life that was going on around me in those days.

In the winter of 1897 certain men were drinking in a saloon in Dawson to cheer each other up. One man drank a little more than he could handle and when he was in a somewhat inebriated condition a friend induced him to purchase what he (the friend) thought was a useless claim, namely Number 29 Eldorado, for the sum of \$600. When the purchaser, a Swede named Charles Anderson, sobered up in the morning and found that his \$600 was gone and in its place he had a grant for 29 Eldorado, his anger was great. He tried to find his friend, but the latter had circumspectly left for Forty Mile River with the cash, so there was nothing for poor Charlie to do but to journey to Eldorado and sink a shaft or two and see what he could find.

Eldorado Creek at Number 29 narrowed up considerably. It was less than half the width of the creek round about claims 14 to 22. Also it was found that the claims 19 to 22 were practically valueless—a most extraordinary thing—and for some time it was supposed that there was no gold in Eldorado above Number 18.

Charlie knew all this and had precious little hope when he put down a shaft on the right-hand side of his new property. But on reaching bedrock, he, like the Scouse Brothers, struck a veritable gold-mine. It was amazingly rich. For a width of about four inches on bedrock I think there was more gold than sand and clay.

Number 29 certainly produced over a million dollars.

Charlie became very much enamoured of a dance-hall belle and the only terms on which she would consent to become his wife was on payment to her private account of \$50,000. This was done and Charlie and his new wife made a triumphal trip to Paris and London, taking in New York and San Francisco on the way back and I believe the money they spent was colossal.

Everything went swimmingly with Charlie until the mine was worked out and then, as so often happened in that easy-come easy-go life, he found himself penniless again. Many years afterwards I heard of him working for wages in a small mine on the B.C. coast.

That is not the end of the story either. A long time after Charlie had disposed of Number 29 for a few hundred dollars, thinking he had worked it all out, the

miners who purchased the claim on spec struck another paystreak, which, although of small area, yielded many thousands of dollars.

Here's a story in which everything went well for the men concerned, in spite of the way they tempted fortune by joining in the lavish spending that seemed inevitable in those careless days.

Clarence Berry and his brother Frank owned claims Numbers 4 and 5 on Eldorado Creek. This ground was immensely profitable and the brothers spent some of the riches like water whenever they went down to the "Forks" for a little recreation. Everyone in the dance-hall would be requested to "line up to the bar" and Berry ordered the bartender to "take their measure." A few of these treats during the night would run into money and it was nothing exceptional for the brothers to spend \$2000—£400—for one evening's amusement.

The Berry's must have cleaned up well over \$1,500,000 before their claims were worked out. On finally leaving the Klondike their luck still held good. Oil had been found in California and Texas and the two brothers went to the latter state and purchased many hundreds of acres of land cheaply in a neighbourhood where sinking for oil was being carried out. They struck it rich again. They had bought themselves right into the middle of the oil belt and the wealth amassed in the Klondike was only a flea-bite to that which flowed into their coffers from oil.

And now one from the opposite angle of a man who lost a fortune—myself!

It occurred not during those early mad years, but later when I had gone to live down on Shawnigan Lake, Vancouver Island, B.C., but it certainly illustrates how wanton the Goddess of Chance can be and the eternal gamble that companions the prospector.

One day I received a note from a friend of mine in Victoria (whom we will call L. D.) asking me to come down at once as something of great importance had turned up. The Eskimalt and Nanaimo Railway passed along the eastern shore of Shawnigan Lake, but at this time only one train a day ran between Nanaimo and Victoria. This left Shawnigan Lake each morning at nine, and there being no other means of transport available, I had to wait for the train on the following morning.

On arrival at my friend's office (he was local representative of one of the most influential companies in Canada) he seemed very much excited.

A young brother-in-law of his living at Yale, B.C., on the Fraser River, he told me, had spent the greater part of the summer in company with two young American prospectors from Nevada, named Allen, panning in and about what was known as Roderick Creek, where many years previously quite a number of miners were at work sluicing the creek gravels for placer gold with good results. Roderick Creek is a

tributary entering the Fraser Canyon about three miles east of Yale in the western foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Many hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of gold dust and nuggets had been dredged and mined out of the bed of the Fraser River itself in and near Yale at periods when the river was low, usually in the autumn. Yale, in the '60's, was a well-known and thriving mining town during the boom-days of the Cariboo Gold Rush, but, as in the case of nearly all placer mining camps, directly the rich claims were worked out there was nothing left to maintain the population, and the boom-town faded away.

After this preliminary, L. D. added, with a touch of the dramatic : " I've asked the Allens to come to my office this afternoon and show you what they have found. I think you will be surprised. They will be here at two o'clock."

At two o'clock they arrived ; the office door was closed and locked and I was introduced to two fine-looking lads, strong and healthy, about twenty-one and twenty-four years of age respectively. One of them carried a large red bandana handkerchief in his hand which appeared to contain some very heavy substance. He placed the handkerchief slowly on the table and unfastened the knot—and to my amazement a mass of free gold was exposed ! There were two large amalgam balls, about the size of tennis balls, of gold dust, masses of coarse gold in thin slabs like the blades of a pocket-

knife, also many pieces of oxidised quartz, literally held together with free gold. It was a wonderful sight—the estimated value of all these specimens was in the neighbourhood of six hundred pounds. After gloating over the exhibits I asked for their story. This was it :

The two brothers Allen were washing a few pans of gravel near the mouth of a small creek which emptied itself into the head waters of Roderick Creek, when they were excited to find a few heavy colours in their pans. These were rough, from which it was evident that the gold had not travelled far and had most probably broken from a rich quartz stringer in the near vicinity. The formation of the country rock was black slate, granite and porphyry. The boys followed up the Creek slowly day after day, panning the gravel carefully and the higher up the Creek they went the better the prospects and the coarser the gold. It was soon noticeable that above a certain point the prospects faded out. Accordingly they concentrated in that vicinity. With pick and shovel the lads moved yards and yards of gravel and slide rock in their efforts to expose farther the black slate in their search for a possible rich vein of quartz, and all the time they were shovelling they were also at frequent intervals making panning tests, until one day they found themselves on a red-hot scent, by washing out several pans rich in coarse rough gold.

Their excitement can well be imagined, especially by those who have had experience in prospecting. They



Indians sentenced to death for the murder of a white prospector.

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Loading cases of gold dust on waggon—David Doig, manager of Bank, can be seen in flannel trousers on verandah. The Bank was hurriedly rebuilt after fire.

redoubled their endeavours, advancing very slowly. Then they panned out some fine specimens of gold in white quartz, the latter being rough and angular, pointing definitely to the fact that the ledge or vein whence it came could not be far away. And one evening about five o'clock they discovered the treasure house from which all their specimens came. It proved to be a small fissure vein of quartz in black slate varying in width from two to eight inches and they opened it up for a depth of five feet.

This little vein, they said, produced the masses of free gold which were now before me.

"Well," I told them, "you most certainly have located one of the richest veins heard of for some years. Now what are your views about opening it up or disposing of your property?"

There was, alas, a fly in the ointment.

"The situation is this," they explained, "nearly all the country in and about Roderick was covered by Crown Granted Miners' Claims staked years and years ago. Very few of the original stakes are left standing as they were burnt down by a forest fire, but it is just possible that our find may be covered by an old claim. We have found the remains of one survey post about fifty yards from our discovery hut, but cannot tell in which direction the side lines may run. We want someone to take the chance and buy us out."

My answer was that I must see the find and to this they

raised no objection. Then and there we made arrangements to proceed to Yale in three days' time. L. D. was to accompany us.

Having arrived at our destination we put up at the smart hotel there and spent the night, starting off early the next morning in our mining kit and carrying food and a blanket each. Our trail lay along the C.P.R. route for three miles as far as the Fraser Canyon, where we looked down into its raging waters. We passed through one long tunnel and finally came to the spot where we had to cross the gorge. This crossing consisted of a strong but ancient wire cable made fast on both sides, to which was attached a small wooden "bucket" or cage. It was about five feet long and three feet six inches in width, with board sides only eight inches deep. Two men could kneel behind each other in this bucket. The method of propulsion was to haul oneself along by pulling on another smaller wire rope which was attached to the bucket. It was a tricky, not to say giddy, business, for the bucket was suspended some 120 feet in the air above the water level of the canyon.

The bucket swayed about a good deal and everyone was squeamish, but, thanks be, the weather was calm. It didn't add to our serenity, however, by knowing that "the only danger" was that owing to the age of the two wire ropes and the rust found on them, there was always the possibility of the pull-rope jamming, in

which case anyone in the bucket would have to make his way hand over hand on the big cable until he reached either bank. Or the whole aged contraption might give way !

However, we got over safely and then proceeded along a narrow trail leading over the nearby mountains until we came to the upper part of Roderick Creek. Here we descended and followed an old trail in the Creek Valley. We passed several tumble-down log cabins used by the early miners and I saw evidence of considerable placer mining work of years gone by. Finally, we arrived at the junction of Roderick Creek with the north and south forks, where we found remains of a two-stamp mill and a fairly large wooden mill house. It was a marvel how some of the heavy mining machinery lying derelict could have been transported on pack horses over the steep and narrow trail we traversed that day—it seemed incredible. The horses themselves had to be slung across that steel cable suspended in the air.

L. D. and I were now full of excitement to view the rich prospect. It was about a mile from the old mill buildings in a tributary of the north fork of Roderick Creek. The strike was made about half-way up this tributary on the right limit, as it is called. Finally, we arrived at the spot. There was a shaft about six feet in depth and four feet wide. Jumping into this, we beheld six feet of an exposed quartz vein in black slate as

already related to us. I had a small geological hammer with me and a strong pocket-knife and began chipping out a section of the vein to find all the quartz carried free gold. In one spot where the vein widened out to six inches I found an immensely rich spot—masses of gold in thin streaks which could be levered out with a strong pocket-knife. L. D. and I could hardly tear ourselves away from this jeweller's shop.

As there were some mining tools at the old mill I suggested we should sink the shaft a few feet deeper to see if the ore continued or whether it was only surface excitement. We reached a depth of twelve feet and all was well, the ore was just as rich as at five feet. We had collected about \$800 worth of specimens and solid gold and, as we were not prepared yet to carry on any further exposure of the reef, we decided to stop and search all round for any possible survey posts. New vegetation was very thick and there were masses of poisonous devil's club to look out for. We located the one partially burnt stake mentioned before, but could find no others. It was impossible to form any definite opinions as to where the stake would interfere with our vein. Finally, we decided to return to Victoria, but you may be sure that before leaving we filled in the twelve-foot shaft to hide our treasure from anyone who might get wind of it and follow our footsteps.

There was no doubt the young Allens had made a very rich discovery. They and R. (L. D.'s brother-in-

law) had staked claims covering the strike both on the east and west sides and had received certificates of title pending an official survey by any Dominion land surveyor.

The day following our return I arranged to meet R. and the two Allens to discuss terms. They stated they were broke except for the free gold they had taken from the vein. This they wished to keep, and were prepared to dispose of all their rights to me for \$6000 in cash. This I considered too much in view of the uncertainty of the location.

My offer was \$4000 and it was a gamble. After much deliberation lasting several days they decided to accept and I closed the deal immediately. In the meantime, however, I had arranged an interview with some well-known local real estate and mining people and explained the situation in confidence. They were completely carried away with excitement on viewing the specimens and in a few days I had signed an agreement to dispose of all my interests in the new find for \$125,000 in cash or share at my option—subject to a satisfactory survey being made proving that the strike was not covered by any Crown Granted Claim.

It was reported about now that the weather was turning very cold in and around Yale and that there had been a slight snowfall, so we hurriedly made arrangements to return to Roderick Creek with a surveyor. We met with a snowstorm at Ruby Creek on the C.P.R.

and it was still snowing on arrival at Yale. It made us anxious. Unless a survey could be completed before the usual heavy winter snowfall came down, we should have to wait until the following April or May before anything could be seen of the surface of the country.

It was snowing heavily before we turned in for the night. R. made a canvass of Yale for snowshoes in case it should be necessary to wear them in order to reach our destination. All he could obtain was two pairs of "Bear Paw" shoes, which are about the same size as the face of an ordinary tennis racket, but still, they were better than nothing.

We started off in snow and with the mercury down to zero. We were a miserable quartet as we marched in single file along the C.P.R. road bed, and I can assure you it was a nasty business swaying over the canyon in that bucket! Everything was plastered with snow, frozen and hard to move. There was a strong wind blowing, too, on this occasion, which numbed our faces and hands. However, we crossed safely and started off up the mountain trail which was buried by about six inches of snow. This filled us with alarm for it presaged worse conditions at the higher levels for which we were making. Our fears were only too well founded. Half-way to Roderick snow was over two feet in depth. R. and I put on our "Bear Paws" and tried to break trails for L. D. and the surveyor. This was hard work and not of much avail as the shoes were too small. The

higher we went the deeper grew the snow, and it soon became evident that at our destination it would be four or five feet in depth. It was useless to take the surveyor to the property if everything was covered by even two feet of snow. Also we carried only a couple of days' food supply, and if by chance we got snowed up badly, the result might be serious—and it is nothing unusual for snow to lie 14 feet deep in that neighbourhood. Still we shuffled on until about two o'clock. If we went much further we should be compelled to get through to the claim or camp in the snow. On the other hand, if we turned back then, we could reach the cable before dark.

We held a short council of war and reluctantly decided to return. A good thing we did because that same night a terrible blizzard raged in the Fraser Canyon with the temperature at 13 degrees below.

I thought that night I wouldn't have changed my hotel bed for the broken old mill up there beyond the canyon if all the gold in the Klondike went with it.

The winter and spring months soon passed and early in April we received information from Yale that the snow was melting fast all over the hills and nearby mountains and that very shortly it would be clear for a survey.

On April 25th it was decided to send up our surveyor. R., who was living in Yale, would accompany him, but I was unable to go, as just then I was booked for the Queen Charlotte Islands to report for an English

company on a gold-silver strike which had recently been made there. I arranged with L. D. that the result of the survey should be telegraphed to me at Prince Rupert, B.C.

Needless to say, I was more than anxious to receive that report. So much depended on it ; £25,000 cash or the loss of this together with the money paid to the Allens.

I was three days on my journey to the Queen Charlottes and on my return to Prince Rupert the wire was there. I tore it open eagerly, knowing a fortune depended on the contents. It was as much a gamble as spinning a coin in the air. Heads to win £25,000 ; tails to lose £1000.

It was tails !

The telegram was brief enough, but very definite. "Nineteen feet adverse." That was all, but it meant that the rich strike was 19 feet within the boundaries of a Crown Granted Claim owned by someone else. Only 19 feet between myself and a fortune ! What tragic luck.

On my return to Victoria, L. D. and I put our heads together and decided that the only chance open to us was to locate the owner of the Crown Granted Claim and try and purchase it for a sum less than the £25,000.

This we did. The claim was in the possession of two very well-known estate agents in Vancouver. They were brothers and said to be quite wealthy.

We arranged a meeting, put most of our cards on the table and tried to complete a reasonable deal. Rumours had reached them from some source that a sensationally rich find had been made on Roderick Creek, but they did not know for certain it was made on their own claim.

"If we send our mining representative to the ground, will you show him the rich vein?" they wanted to know.

"Not until we have come to some satisfactory terms for the sale of the property to us," I answered. Finally, the brothers said they would communicate with us in a few days time.

Their reply was duly received. The price asked was the absurd figure of \$300,000 or £60,000, and, try as we did to obtain a reasonable purchase price, they absolutely refused to budge. Never did budge. So we were compelled to break off negotiations and try to forget the whole thing. Bad luck!

We heard that the brothers were sending up a gang of men to open up the vein, but I doubted if they would find it—we had covered it all up pretty carefully.

The years passed. I was in the Arctic exploring, prospecting, hunting and in France, fighting. Not until 1920 was I again in Vancouver on my way to the Yukon. I had forgotten about Yale and Roderick Creek. But one morning the telephone bell rang in my room at the hotel,

"This is E. E. R. speaking," came a voice. "I saw your name in the newspaper this morning. Do you remember the strike which was made on our Crown Granted Claim and in which you were interested?"

"Rather," I laughed ruefully. "Only too well; I lost a fortune over it."

"Well," he said, "do you think you could locate that ledge?"

"Most certainly. Why?"

"We have never been able to find it," was the morose explanation, "although we've had a good many men searching."

I'm afraid I chuckled.

"What fee would you want to show us where it is?" he asked.

I pondered for a few minutes, wondering whether I could spare a few days, as I was in a hurry to go north. Then I told him my fee would be \$1000. "And that's jolly reasonable," I added.

"I will talk it over with my partners and 'phone or write you," was his answer.

But he never did. Not a word came from these people again and, so far as my information goes, the lost vein is still lost and likely to remain so. The Allen brothers have disappeared; R. is no more; L. D. is still alive, but it is very doubtful if he could locate the vein again.

Shall I go back? I don't know. Perhaps.

CHAPTER VII

SKAGWAY AND "THE BONEYARD OF THE PACIFIC"

IN 1899 the winter in the Yukon started very early—on September 23rd the temperature fell to 11 degrees below zero—a most unusual occurrence. It compelled us to close down our sluicing and gold mining operations as the water we were using froze up at the dam, and in any event there was only a "trickle" left in Bonanza Creek. At every clean-up I had put aside several ounces of the best nuggets and by September we had a wonderful lot valued at \$8000. This included two fine specimens—one worth \$74 and the other \$143. This collection was placed in a long leather "poke," or gold sack, and this in turn in a wooden box and screwed down—the weight being about 41 lbs. This I brought back to England.

The little stern-wheeled steamer *Ora* was due to sail for Whitehorse on October 4th and I booked my passage in her. The weather was very cold and snow had fallen. Compared with the large Yukon River steamers such as the *Columbian* and *Victorian*, which had already gone into winter quarters, the *Ora* was like a match-box, her stateroom accommodation could take care of

about twelve passengers more or less comfortably—such as comfort *was* in those days. There were two bunks in each “stateroom” with about a foot’s space to stand up in between the bunk and the wall ; no one was supposed to undress except perhaps to take off a heavy mackinaw or overcoat. There were no washing arrangements. To obtain water for one’s use there was a zinc bucket with rope attached which one lowered over the side of the steamer and hauled up one’s supply—no hot water, of course, unless one went down to the boiler-room and got some from the engineer. I have said there was room for about twelve passengers, we carried forty-three—goodness knows where they all slept, all over the place. Some took it in turns, sleeping four hours and then giving way for others.

There was a tiny dining saloon and the meals were awful. We soon started to run out of food. At Indian River, 28 miles from Dawson only, we steamed into slush ice which stopped progress and soon the slush began to freeze and we were frozen in. This was serious. Firewood for the boilers began to peter out and passengers and crew had to go ashore and cut timber, carrying it over the ice to the steamer. Trees were being chopped down in all directions and there were many narrow escapes. We were held up for about thirty hours and then the ice started to move once more and we were freed.

We obtained some moose meat from a camp of Indians

at Indian River, and whether it was this or some unclean food or cooking utensil, about thirty of us were attacked with ptomaine poisoning, accompanied by a severe attack of dysentery and vomiting. In those circumscribed conditions our discomfort can be better imagined than described ! On top of all this the steamer was compelled at times to tie up to the river-bank for short periods.

I forgot to remark that when I went into my state-room (!) at the dock in Dawson, I found a drunken miner lying in my bunk. He was wearing long rubber boots which were covered in mud, his hair was unkempt, likewise his beard. He wore no coat, although it was freezing weather. We got a couple of deck-hands to remove the offending fellow to his own bunk which I was glad to find was not in my stateroom. This drunken chap proved to be a mine owner from Hunker Creek, where he had struck some good pay, had made a fairly good clean up and seemed determined to celebrate the event every day.

He issued a challenge to a big fat Irishman on board, named Jack Noon (a most amusing character and the life and soul of the steamer throughout the trying journey) that he could drink him under the table, and that he would back himself for \$25 (£5). Jack Noon took him on. About eight o'clock one night the Bacchanalian contest began. There was to be an umpire to see that each man took the same number of drinks

and the same amount. They solemnly sat at a table with a couple of bottles of whiskey, a bowl of sugar and a bottle of mixed pickles. Jack Noon consumed pickles between drinks and the miner drank his whiskey with masses of sugar. From time to time the passengers looked in to see how the match was progressing, and, finally, Noon ran out an easy winner, as his opponent was on the floor before the second bottle of whiskey was half finished.

By the time we reached Fort Selkirk we were on less than half rations ; there was practically no food left on the steamer. There, however, we got a small amount of moose meat and a plentiful supply of canned goods of every description, which saved the situation. We also heard that there was very little ice running above the Pelly River, which was cheering.

Every day some of the passengers had to go ashore and fell trees and cut them up for the boiler. Without such help the little steamer would most certainly have been frozen in for the winter. Finally, after battling for eleven days with all our discomforts, we arrived at Whitehorse, the head of navigation, at the foot of the Whitehorse Rapids.

There was no railway at this time beyond the head of Lake Bennett, connection being made between Whitehorse and the head of Milres Canyon by means of wooden trolleys running on wooden rails which one pushed along by hand-power for several miles.

My box of nuggets was placed on a trolley with me. There was not much danger of anyone stealing it from under one's nose because there was no means of getting out of the country with it. After laboriously pushing our trolley to the head of the famous canyon, we connected with the sister steamer of the *Ora*, called the *Flora*, in which we ascended the upper Lewes River and crossed Marsh and Tagish Lakes to Lake Bennett. My box of nuggets was now in the care of the purser of the steamer so that I could walk about and talk to various people at Tagish Post.

Before we left Whitehorse a young Australian, named Billy Perkins, showed me some very rich specimens of copper ore such as bornite ruby, malachite, grey copper, copper sulphides, etc. These came from a district only a few miles from Whitehorse and he was most anxious for me to go out and stake claims and also for me to take some of his specimens to London and float a company. I brought them to the managing-director of "The Exploration Company," known as Rothschild's Exploration Company, who was very interested in the ore and, on my return to the Klondike, he requested me to investigate the various properties and if possible obtain reasonable options. It may be interesting to relate that not only did I investigate the new copper belt, but that most of the more promising properties were owned by friends of mine from Dawson, so that I was able to obtain options for them at absurdly low

figures. One instance was the "Pueblo" claim. My option for this was £6000; this property produced over £200,000 and was sold for more than this sum. Unfortunately for The Exploration Company and myself, not a single option was taken up, nor was any prominent mining engineer from the staff sent out to examine and report. The White Pass Yukon Railway eventually constructed a branch line to this new copper belt and shipped out many thousands of tons by rail and steamer to the smelter at Tacema, in Washington.

Had my options been taken up my luck would have held good again and my position would have been very similar to the purchase of our Cheechako Hill property, getting in on the ground floor for a song.

From Tagish the little steamer *Flora* delivered us at the head of Lake Bennett, which was now the terminus of the newly constructed narrow-gauge line known as the White Pass and Yukon Railway, operating between Skagway and Lake Bennett. We were more than thankful that it would not be necessary for us to tackle the now famous White Pass trail over the mountains, where appalling hardships were endured by the gold seekers of '97 and '98. Many a horse and many a man left their bones on this trail, as they did also on the Chilcoot Pass.

It was pleasant to be on this miniature railway. When I stepped off my last train it was in San Francisco in June, 1898, since when I had seen no train of any sort,



A long way from the Strand ! Savoy Hotel, Fort Selkirk, 1900. The Author (with white scarf) is seen *en route* to Dawson by dog team. Another 176 miles to go ; temperature 55° below zero.



A river steamer passing through Five Fingers Rapids, Upper Yukon.



Exercising the Author's sleigh dogs—Gold Hill and mouth of Eldorado Creek in distance.

and it was now October, 1899. The construction of the White Pass Railway was a wonderful piece of engineering work, all rock cutting until the summit of the White Pass was reached. Commencing along the Skagway River at sea level the railroad reached an elevation of 3000 feet in 16 miles. In places it almost made one giddy to look out of the window and gaze down into space ; there appeared to be nothing between the rails and a drop of 1000 feet. A good many lives were lost during its construction. In one place a small cross had been erected on the top of an enormous mass of granite to commemorate the death of two men belonging to the construction gang, who lie buried underneath. It appears that this rock was slightly overhanging and the two men were sheltering under it while large charges of dynamite were being fired in the close vicinity. The explosion jarred the sheltering rock to such an extent that it fell and buried the two men instantly.

By the time I reached the train the three passenger coaches were full up, so some of us from the *Ora* assembled in the baggage coach and made ourselves as comfortable as possible. There were several husky dogs with their masters and it was not long before bottles of whiskey were produced. What with whiskey and tobacco smoke and very little space, we were soon almost asphyxiated. I was still sitting on my box of nuggets and never letting it out of my sight ; it was not safe to leave it for a moment now that we were near

Skagway and the sea. We finally arrived in Skagway where I got a bed at some miserable hotel, but then came the question of the nuggets. I couldn't risk locking them in my bedroom, they would have disappeared in no time—so I thought I'd take a chance with the hotel safe. The box was so big and the safe so small that it was quite a job getting it in, but it was eventually accomplished by removing various account books. I did not feel very happy about it for hotel-keepers in Skagway about this time (with few exceptions) were not very reliable people. Anyway, there was no help for it, I had to take the chance.

Skagway, in October, 1899, was still what is known as a "live town"; there were saloons at almost every corner, overflowing with crowds of men of all sorts and conditions, some going "outside," some going "inside," employees of the White Pass and Yukon Railway and cardsharps, confidence trick men and a lot of the scum of South-Eastern Alaska. There was one large dance hall, theatre, and gambling den, all in one, which everyone frequented. Dance-hall girls were much in evidence and the class of variety show with which we were treated was too vulgar and awful to recall in print.

Like all "boom" camps, Skagway attracted tough characters of every description, men preying on their fellow men. One of these who gained great notoriety was a tall, heavily built fellow with black hair and beard, whose nickname was "Soapy Smith." For a long time

he was respected by many of the stampederers arriving in Skagway on their way over the White Pass. He seemed to be the recognised head of the civil population and it is said that once, when a procession was organised to celebrate some national event, "Soapy" rode at the head of the procession. Yet all the while he was head of a gang of cardsharps and confidence men. On the trail they would disguise themselves and carry dummy loads on their backs and try to engage men in all sorts of games—cards, dice, shell and so on. Needless to say, their victims were usually cleaned out.

Soapy Smith and his gang carried on with their depredations for a considerable period before the citizens began to grow suspicious. One or two dead bodies were found with bullet holes in them, pointing very much to murder. Bodies were also found floating in Skagway harbour which were certainly not all suicides.

At the time of the Klondike rush America was engaged in a war with the Philippines and Soapy perpetrated a very cunning but foolish trick in order to rob as many men as possible. He turned a log cabin into a recruiting station for the United States Army! There were hundreds of men who arrived in Skagway *en route* for the Klondike, but when they realised what terrible hardships were in front of them, they got the proverbial "cold feet," sold their outfits for a mere song and prepared to return to their homes. A large number of these men at a loose end were attracted by Soapy's recruiting notice

and duly presented themselves for enlistment. The procedure was for the intended recruit to give his name and address on entering the cabin. Each recruit was then ordered into another room, where he was told to take off all his clothes and then proceed into still another room for medical examination. While that was going on one of the gang searched the discarded clothes and appropriated everything of value in the pockets. Of course the game soon "blew up," and was definitely traced to Soapy and his gang.

One young Englishman became very violent on finding all his money gone and vowed he would shoot Soapy on sight. He procured a heavy-calibred six-shooter, returned to the vicinity of the recruiting cabin, and waited with anger in his heart. He was young and inexperienced in the ways and means of tough American gunmen, but he was certainly game. He got in two shots at fairly close range, but missed. That cost him his life, poor fellow, because Soapy was a crack shot and killed him dead first shot.

This killing brought things to a head. The citizens called a meeting among themselves. A vigilants' committee was appointed and a man named Read was placed in charge. His first job was to try to clear Soapy and his gang out of Skagway. Not an easy task, believe me, but he tackled it, and Soapy was requested to leave immediately by the first steamer or other means of transport. It was intimated to Read that Soapy would

take orders from no one, that he was armed, and if anyone interfered with him it would be at his peril.

Now Read was a brave man, also a good shot, and he determined to call Soapy's bluff, if bluff it was. A steamer duly arrived and Read, armed with a magazine Winchester rifle, proceeded towards the wharf which butted out into Skagway harbour to see that Soapy obeyed instructions to leave town. As Read started to walk down the wharf he saw Soapy facing him and standing in the middle of the wharf. They seemed to know instinctively that one or the other of them would have to die. Both fired at the same second, Read with his rifle and Soapy with a revolver. Both bullets found their billets. Soapy dropped to the shot and died almost at once. Read staggered about for some time until help arrived, but the poor fellow was mortally wounded and died a few days afterwards. But he had done his work. With the death of its leader the gang broke up and disappeared, and little or no further trouble was experienced in Skagway.

My passage to Vancouver was booked on a small, American coastal steamer named the *Rosalie*. I collected my box of nuggets and was thankful to find they had not been tampered with. The journey from Skagway to Vancouver in those days was a somewhat hazardous undertaking—1200 miles of inland water infested with reefs, islands and other dangers to navigation. Much of this waterway was uncharted and lights or buoys

were very scarce indeed. This route was always called "The boneyard of the Pacific," and it lived up to its reputation, particularly during the first ten years of the Klondike boom.

How captains of steamers ever managed to navigate these inland channels was always a mystery to me, and I take off my hat to those early officers of coasting vessels who were compelled in many instances when steaming along at night, continually to sound their whistles so as to obtain their positions by timing the echo from the nearby rocky and mountainous shore. The channel was impeded throughout its length with reefs submerged at high water, rocks, floating timbers, icebergs, right-angled turnings in narrow waterways, bad visibility, strong currents and, in the winter, snowstorms, fogs, blizzards. A truly nerve-racking voyage for any navigator.

When the huge rush started north every tin-pot steamer which could float was pressed into service. Some were nothing more nor less than match-boxes. Deck cabins were built almost as high as the depth of the hull of the steamers, making the boat top-heavy and extremely dangerous in any sort of sea. The most appalling-looking old tubs, whose names we knew very well at the time, traversed these waters successfully for years—it was nothing more than miraculous. On the other hand large and well-equipped steamers, with well-trained officers, often went to the bottom. Miners and

others travelling in and out of the Yukon in the early days will remember the steamers *Alki*, *Elihu-B-Root*, *City of Seattle*, *Alameda*, *Amur*, *Princess May*, *Islander*, *Rosalie*, *Prince George*, *Prince John*, *Princess Beatrice*, *Princess Sophia*, *Cutch* and many more. I took passage in all the above-mentioned tubs and steamers and made numerous voyages in the *Amur* and *Princess May*.

Everyone who constantly travelled up and down the coast always said that the *City of Seattle* was the most dangerous boat to sail in, as she was top-heavy and would certainly turn turtle one day, also that she was a wooden boat with a very thin hull, and that if she struck a rock she would go down in a few minutes. I made one very unpleasant voyage in her when we struck a gale at the entrance to Queen Charlotte Sound. She rolled nearly over and passengers were terrified. There were seventy-four horses on board and their stalls opened out of the dining saloon, the doors being always open and the stench in consequence awful. There is no doubt we were in grave danger for a while until the captain managed to turn the steamer round and head for safety in a land-locked cove he knew, where we remained for two days. The food was bad. We carried a large number of passengers, so many, in fact, that it was necessary to provide three sittings for each meal, and God help those who drew the last sitting ! The *City of Seattle*, in spite of all convictions to the contrary,

remained on the surface for years, and as far as I know may still be in commission—she must have made very large sums for her owners.

It was in the *Hating* (owned by the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company) that I made one of the worst trips to Vancouver. The steamer was crowded, cots being put in the corridors and some of the passengers sleeping on the floor in the smoking and dining saloons. All went well until the Straits of Georgia were reached. On that particular afternoon I was on the bridge with the captain, where we were using a rifle, taking long shots at various sea-birds. When we were not more than three or four hours out from Vancouver a heavy fog seemed to arrive suddenly from nowhere. Before we left the bridge the captain said he would take what he called the inner passage and carry on slowly through the fog as there was not much danger.

I remember leaving the bridge about three o'clock and returning to my cabin, where I was in the act of lying down on my bed to read, when there was a terrific impact, throwing my head violently against the wooden wall of the cabin which nearly knocked me out. It felt as if the whole steamer was smashed to pieces against something. In a few seconds I was on deck and, to my surprise (and satisfaction), there were rocks and trees all round the bow of the boat. Passengers were still arriving on deck, but I saw only one man with a life-buoy and that was ex-Senator Jeremiah Lynch of

California. He was hatless, his grey hair on end and his little goatee beard twitching hurriedly from fright.

“Hullo, Jerry, what are you doing with the lifebuoy?” I asked him. “Are you going to take to the water?”

“No, I got hold of it in case any woman needed help,” he solemnly assured me, but we all took his reply with a grain of salt!

On making a hurried survey of our position I found we were hard and fast on the rocks of some small, uninhabited island. The bow of the steamer was well ashore and the stern in deep water. Later we learned we had hit Texada Island, about fifty-three miles from Vancouver. As the captain was afraid the steamer might slip off the rocks at low tide and perhaps sink, he ordered everyone ashore. The ship was made fast with steel hawsers to “dead men” planted on land, which were the only precautions the captain could take. There was one effect in connection with the abandonment which I always remember and that was the sight of hundreds of rats leaving the ship—the chains and ropes seemed to be alive with them. After the rats came the Chinese members of the crew—mostly cooks and their staffs.

We set to work to build large camp-fires and then, with the aid of mattresses and blankets from the ship, everyone began to take a philosophical view of affairs. We organised parties with axes to provide fuel which was abundant on the island, also two friends of mine returned

to the ship for a short while and came back with large enamel jugs full of hot whiskey toddie—this effort cheered us up enormously and there was much sing-song in consequence.

This, of course, was before the days of wireless, so one of the ship's boats was manned by the second officer and four deck hands, with instructions to make for the mainland and get in touch with Vancouver. It was expected to take them a couple of days to accomplish this. All we could do was to sit and wait.

We spent a fairly miserable night on the rocks—there was hardly a foot of level space anywhere except a long way back from the shore, and rocks are damned hard things to sleep on! Many of the passengers sat or walked about most of the night. Early the next morning the captain gave all hands permission to return to the ship during daylight, but we were compelled to spend the night ashore.

To our great joy and satisfaction a small steamer—*The Queen*—appeared late on the second day. She brought officers of the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company, surveyors, insurance people, etc., and after completing their investigations, all passengers from the ill-fated *Hating* went aboard *The Queen* and were in due course landed in Vancouver. We lost nothing—except a little time. It was perhaps the most comfortable shipwreck ever staged and would have made an excellent background for a present-day film story.

The coldest, the most miserable and uncomfortable voyage I ever made between Vancouver and Skagway was in the small steamer *Cutch*. In size she was little better than an average tug-boat ; there were a few deck cabins and she rolled and pitched gloriously at the slightest pretence of a sea. On this particular journey we encountered a succession of gales, finally ending up in a blizzard. The snow froze hard as it settled on everything and the rigging was soon treble its normal size.

The ship's anchor assumed huge proportions. Axes and hot water had to be used to clear the doors of the cabins (which opened on to the deck), also steps, hatches, etc. Those of the passengers who owned fur coats were very fortunate, as the temperature in the cabins was close on zero. But we eventually arrived safely at Skagway and were a very much photographed ship.

It was early in February when we arrived in Skagway and in July of the same year I sent an order to a Vancouver firm to ship me in to Dawson some \$4000 worth of supplies—mostly food.

Mr. E. O. Finlaison, the accountant of the Bank of B. N. in Dawson, asked me if I wished to insure the shipment, and I replied that I thought it was hardly necessary during the summer months when visibility was good and there were no gales or icebergs to be afraid of.

"Well," said he, "if you take my advice you'll insure."

"How much will it cost?" I asked.

"\$125.

"Very well," I told him, "you can insure the shipment for me."

We received advices of the goods having left Vancouver on the *Cutch* and about three days later the boat struck a reef and went to the bottom! The insurance was duly paid and a duplicate shipment telegraphed for.

The sinking of the *Islander* was the first real shipping tragedy connected with the Klondike rush and 60 per cent of the passengers were well known in the Yukon territory; they comprised miners, prospectors, mining operators, business men and the wives and children of well-known people.

At that time the *Islander* was the most comfortable steamer operating on the Skagway run. The cabins were comfortable, the food excellent and it carried a well-disciplined crew.

The ship left Skagway late one August evening in 1901 with a full complement of passengers for Vancouver. The weather was fine and the water smooth. Everyone on board was happy to be returning once more to civilisation. One or two old prospectors had been in the interior of the Yukon for ten years and more; they had cleaned up a few thousand dollars and were returning to the outside to buy farms or businesses and settle down for the remainder of their lives.

I received first-hand information concerning the tragedy from J. P. Morgan, an agent for the New York Life Insurance Company of Winnipeg, who was a passenger in the ill-fated steamer.

Morgan stated that just before going down into the dining saloon about 11 p.m. for supper he was on deck for a short time and remarked what a beautiful night it was. He and many others had enjoyed themselves exceedingly in the matter of drinks, so that by the time some of them went down to supper they had had more than enough.

I can visualise the scene now—a crowd of happy people seated at oblong tables, no formalities, everyone joining in the conversation and cracking jokes and greatly enjoying their food, when suddenly there was felt a gentle thud followed by a grating or grinding sound against the hull of the steamer and she commenced to reel over to starboard and then straighten up again. In another moment came loud blasts from the whistle and Morgan thought the steamer had arrived at Juneau and was making fast to the wharf. Passengers rushed up on deck and found the steamer was sinking! She had in those few minutes taken a tremendous list to starboard again and was going down by the head.

Orders had been issued to get out the boats, rafts and everything else likely to float. No one knows actually what happened to cause so great a loss of life. The life-saving appliances may not have been adequate or perhaps

it was impossible to get them out in time. Anyway, water was pouring into the steamer. She had struck a low-lying blue iceberg, invisible at night, and apparently the hull was ripped open almost from stem to stern. Yet the impact had been so quiet ! She had glided along the side of the iceberg and made no noise except a slight grating rumble and had heeled slightly over to starboard. Many passengers had gone to bed and it is believed that a lot of these never left their cabins—the sound of the striking of the iceberg was so faint that it could not have awakened the passengers who were asleep, and although every effort was made to stir them out of their cabins, nevertheless, Morgan considered that a number of people must have gone down without ever getting on deck.

There appears to have been very little panic or excitement on board. No one dreamed that the ship would go down so soon. All rafts and things which would float were cut loose and some got overboard, but few boats put away.

“All of us who were eating supper,” said Morgan, “in the saloon felt the impact, but when the whistle blew we thought we were at the wharf in Juneau. With others I ran on deck to see where we were and found nothing but darkness and sea all round. Word was passed that we had struck something and the boats were being slung out. The steamer almost immediately began to take on a list to starboard and all the boats on the

port side were rendered useless. I tried to lend a hand with or get into a boat on the starboard side, but could find no room—the ship was heeling over fast and it was difficult to stand erect. I could find no life-buoys or belts. I groped my way to the stern where I had seen a life-belt made fast for emergencies. The belt was gone. I felt now that I had better be going overboard—the ship was commencing to go down by the head. But somehow I could not face the idea of leaping into the freezing water. I had had a lot to drink and plenty to eat so that I felt comfortable inside ; even when the stern began to rise out of the water I could not jump. The stern rose higher and higher and I grasped the iron rail with both hands. Higher and higher went the stern and still I clung on. Then down plunged the stricken steamer and I was still holding the rail until there was a violent jar and only then was my grip released and I rose to the surface nearly drowned. Almost within reach I found a long board and I was able to support myself on this. The sea was petrifyingly icy and I am certain that unless I had consumed so much alcohol I should have perished with the cold. For two hours I hung to that board with perished hands and body before I, with many more passengers and crew, was rescued by a motor launch from Juneau.

“ A very curious thing happened later when we were drifting about looking for possible survivors. Before the ship went down I had taken off my jacket and

dropped it on the deck at my feet and thought no more of it. While in the launch, to my astonishment, I saw my coat floating in the sea and we picked it up. I may say that my pocket-book in that coat contained a large sum of cash as well as drafts on outside banks for several thousand dollars. They were all intact, though soaking wet ! ”

My friend, J. P., by the way, was subjected to another misfortune. In pursuance of his business he had received many thousand dollars in payment of first premiums on insurance policies. Nearly all this money was paid in gold dust valued at \$16 per oz. Now J. P. thought he would be very clever and make a few extra dollars for himself by exporting the gold dust he had received and selling it to the Mint in Vancouver or San Francisco, where he expected to receive about \$17.25 per oz., thus making a profit of roughly 5s. per oz. He should, of course, have sold the dust to one of the banks in Dawson and remitted a draft to his company for the amount. J. P.'s sack of gold dust—\$7000 worth—went down in the ship, and to his further mortification, he was made to refund the amount personally to his company.

Fred Recate was another ill-fated passenger on the *Islander*. He owned an adjoining claim to mine on Cheechako Hill, and we were very good friends. Recate had worked out his claim and was leaving the Klondike for good with sacks of gold dust valued at \$30,000.

In addition, he had drafts for a substantial sum of money and was looking forward to his return to his native state of Oregon where he was going to start some sort of business. Poor Recate went to the bottom with the ship. He was actually seen on deck with one large bag of gold dust just before the ship went down.

On the *Islander* going south was Mrs. Ross, two of her children and a relative or friend. Mrs. Ross was the wife of the Commissioner or Governor of the Yukon. She had been spending the summer in the north and was on her way outside for the winter with her children. They were all drowned.

There was a great loss of life, but I do not now remember the actual figures. Also well over a million dollars in gold dust went down with the ship. She sank less than one and a half miles from the shore, and it was not until 1934 she was salvaged.

While on this subject of disasters on the Skagway run I may mention that in October, 1914, on my way from Skagway to Victoria, I, with two friends, took passage in the *Sophia*. We were hurrying out to join up in the Great War. The *Sophia* was a new steamer just out from Scotland. She resembled an Atlantic liner in miniature, very comfortable cabins, hot and cold water, wash-basins, tasteful decorations, smart crew and stewards, excellent food and was commanded at the time by Captain John McLeod, an old Nova Scotia sailor with plenty of experience of deep-sea navigation and wind-

jammers. He was a great friend of mine and allowed me in his cabin and in the pilot house for short spells. I always remember his remarks about the *Sophia*.

"I don't like her, my son," he declared emphatically. "She don't steer right. There's something wrong with her build—her rudder or something. I don't like her and shall be glad to get out of her."

Leaving Skagway in the Fall of 1917 the *Sophia* carried a full load of passengers. Some of the best-known men in the Yukon, including a large number of employees of the White Pass and Yukon Company, many pilots, captains and crews from the stern-wheel steamers operating on the Upper and Lower Yukon and Atlin Lake, all going "outside" for the winter, as the Yukon had frozen over and the river steamers had been hauled out of the water and placed in winter quarters.

Captain Locke was in command—the veteran, Captain McLeod, having been promoted to a larger steamer. Locke had skippered another of the C.P.S.S. Company's steamers for a long time, namely the *Amur*, a very small and uncomfortable trading steamer. I had made many trips in all sorts of weather with Captain Locke in this steamer—in a rough sea and gale such as we once experienced in Hecate Straits, she spent most of her time under water. Every time she went down into the trough of the waves we thought she would never come up again—but she did. It was impossible to sink her. We

poked about round the shores of the Queen Charlotte Islands, stopping at whaling stations, salmon canneries, dog-fish camps, fish storage plants (frozen), mining camps, etc. Captain Locke handled his ship in these narrow and dangerous landings as one would steer a motor to-day. Thus you can be sure the *Sophia* was in capable hands.

Soon after leaving Skagway she ran into a sudden blizzard. Everyone was merry down in the dining saloon and in the staterooms, glad to be going out for the winter. Most of them were *en route* for California and Florida to obtain some sunshine and avoid the cold of the north. The steamer battled her way against the head-on freezing blizzard. No one dreamed of danger. The passengers were all in bed, it was dark and still snowing heavily when, early in the morning, there was a terrible crash which alarmed the whole ship. Immediately up swarmed the passengers, mostly half-dressed. A gale was blowing and snow was still falling. No one knew what had happened. No rocks could be seen, no coast-line, but it was evident that the ship was aground.

Towards daylight the storm abated and the situation had been explained to the passengers by Captain Locke. They had struck a well-known reef which is submerged at high water, but it was a charted and recognised danger-point. It was revealed some time after the disaster that the *Sophia* was nearly one and a half miles off her course to starboard. When I heard this it reminded me of

Captain McLeod's remark that "she didn't steer right," and that he wanted to get out of her !

The S O S had been sent out and Captain Locke said the *Princess Victoria* had left Vancouver and was speeding to the rescue. About midday some small launches appeared round the *Sophia* from Juneau, offering to take off some of the passengers, but none would leave the steamer and Captain Locke refused all help.

The ship was hard and fast on the reef about one-third of her length and badly damaged.

The captain gambled with the weather in refusing immediate aid from Juneau. He thought the gale had finished, was not likely to recur for forty-eight hours, and he decided that the ship would come to no harm while waiting for the *Victoria* to take everyone off.

The sea had gone down, land was less than one and three-quarters of a mile away, and sight of land always gives one a feeling of security. The passengers were no longer alarmed and waited confidently for the rescue ship. Alas, just before dark another gale came on. The inland sea was lashed into dangerous waves and the stern of the steamer began to heave about. The captain ordered oil to be pumped out all round the ship. What the passengers did, or what were their emotions, nobody knows or ever will know, because sometime during that hideous night the ship broke in two and foundered with every living soul on board. There were some strong

swimmers among the passengers, but not a single man reached the shore or was saved. The oil which was pumped out of the ill-fated *Sophia* helped to drown many passengers.

Friends of mine went down in this steamer, including Charlie Bloomquist, a well-known Yukon River pilot and whose home was within half a mile of mine on Vancouver Island.

About eight feet of the masts of the *Sophia* were visible above the surface for several years. On my return to the Yukon after the war in 1920 they could still be seen.

CHAPTER VIII

SIX HUNDRED MILES BY SLEIGH

OWING to the time of year, January, 1900, I found after my first visit home that on returning to Dawson it was necessary to make the final stage of the journey over the winter trail by sleigh and dog team. Therefore I made arrangements with my Norwegian foreman to meet me in Vancouver with six or seven dogs and we would train them as we went along. Dogs were very scarce at this time, since hundreds were being bought and taken north.

My Norwegian, by name Bergeson, had purchased three Llewellyn setters and a dog he called a sheep dog, by name Faro. This animal was small and stocky. He had a black curly coat with light-coloured muzzle and legs from the knee down, also a peculiar yellow spot immediately over each eye, giving him the appearance sometimes of having four eyes. I think he was a cross between a curly coated retriever and a collie. Faro has been described in detail because he was destined to lead a most eventful life in the history of the McMillan River and its trappers.

We bought a sleigh and dog harness and spare parts,

and took passage on the *Cutch*. We had a dreadful voyage, running into a terrific snow blizzard in the Lynn Canal after a stormy crossing of Queen Charlotte Sound, where we were mostly on our beam ends. By the time we reached Skagway the steamer looked like a cake of ice. We were all frozen into our staterooms, which were on the upper deck and exposed to the gale. The snow had turned into ice all over the outside of the cabin windows and on the ropes, stays, anchors, mast, etc. It was pleasant for us and our dogs to get out of this and make our way to the hospitable " Pullen House " where we could get warmth.

After a short stay in Skagway to limber up the dogs and test our sleigh and tackle, we left by train for Bennett, where our sleigh journey would start. Again we met with a blizzard on the summit of the White Pass and a snow-plough had to be attached to the head of the locomotive. The snow was eight feet deep and we were cutting a lane through this the whole of the day and night until 4 a.m. on the following morning. There were only a few passengers in one small coach and we were starved and frozen—a most miserable journey ! More dead than alive, we got ourselves and dogs out of the train, luckily found the one and only restaurant open, and so before very long our starving bodies were replenished and our dogs had a good feed. We then obtained a freezing room in a freezing hotel.

When reporting myself to the Royal North-West

Mounted Police post in Bennett, giving particulars of ourselves and our intended journey over the ice to Dawson, we were told that a murder had been committed in the neighbourhood of Fort Selkirk and were asked to keep a careful look out along the trail as the suspected murderers were somewhere between Fort Selkirk and Lake Bennett and they were armed with rifles and probably revolvers. I had purchased a 30.40 Winchester carbine in Vancouver so we decided to carry this slung across the handlebars of the sleigh, where it would be in readiness for quick action if necessary.

In our sleigh we carried two fur robes, a small leather kit-bag, some dog feed (rice and bacon) and a small box of tools and kit for repairing sleigh and harness. For food we relied on reaching a road-house each night.

About 9 a.m. on the morning of February 19th, we started on our 600-mile journey. The temperature was about 20 degrees below zero, with a slight breeze and the trail was heavy from a recent snowfall. We very soon found that an extra dog we had purchased in Bennett was a useless animal, absolutely refusing to work at all. He "wouldn't pull your hat off your head," as Bergeson said, but just ran along slowly in his traces, making no effort to help. Most men starting on a journey such as this would have put a bullet through the dog's head, but I decided to give him away to the first person we met who would take him.

It took us all day to cover 17 miles and, having arrived



The S.S. *Hating* (afterwards renamed *Princess May*) wrecked on a small island in Gulf of Georgia, 1899. The Author was on board.



Another view of steamer. In background, camp fires built by passengers marooned on island.



The Author and his gold-dust cleaning and weighing office, Bonanza Creek,
1899.

at the first road-house (a couple of tents on a small island in the middle of the frozen lake), we decided to camp for the night. Bergeson was in better condition than myself, but at the same time he had had enough, as we had both been helping the dogs by pushing the sleigh and hauling on a rope.

The dogs were very green, but were improving. We trained them to pull by walking in front and cheering them on. It seemed to us that Faro was either ill or else no use, although Bergeson said he shaped very well both when tried in San Francisco and at Bennett. None of the dogs would touch the rice and bacon we offered them, which alarmed us as we had nothing else to give them—they had been fed principally on meat and bones before starting on the journey, and apparently disliked the change of menu. The tent was freezing cold and there were only two bunks left for weary wayfarers, the others being already occupied. They were double bunks formed by a piece of canvas being stretched over a central pole. I climbed into my half, wrapped in my fur robe and next to a man who was already asleep and snoring. Waking up half-frozen at daylight, I looked at my sleeping partner and beheld a black, grinning face.

That was the first and last time in my life that I slept with a nigger.

When getting ready in the morning for the next stage of our journey there was no doubt that Faro was

ill and I diagnosed distemper. I had taken rather a fancy to the little chap and so I decided to take him along with us and wrap him up in the sleigh until he either improved or died. This we did and every night he was taken into the road-house or tent where we stopped and given warm canned milk or a drop of soup if procurable. He gradually improved and was in harness again shortly before we reached Dawson.

We were now left with only the three setters to pull, so that unless the trail was good either Bergeson or myself gave the dogs a hand by hauling on a rope attached to the front of the sleigh.

It took us several days of hard going before we began to get fit. We encountered heavy trail, narrow, up and down and rough. The dogs were learning, but owing to their light coats they were unable to withstand the cold as well as the native huskies and malamutes, particularly at night. Our greatest anxiety, however, lay in the fact that they would not eat their rice and bacon and there was nothing else for them except a few meagre scraps from the road-houses.

When we passed what is now the town of Whitehorse there was one large log cabin only. The trail here took us along the frozen stream known as the 50-mile river, then across the open and bleak Lake Lebarge, 32 miles long. It was a trying trip, very cold and we faced a slight wind. However, we found a warm and hospitable road-house at the foot of the lake, which

was owned by an Englishman, a friend of mine who had been a purser on one of the small river steamers on the Yukon the previous summer. The place seemed to be full, but not many of the inmates were *en route* like ourselves for Dawson. There were two well-known Dawson women present, but they were going with their escorts in the opposite direction, namely Bennett and Skagway. However, we all slept in the same bunk house in rows and tiers and my feet were in close proximity to one of the ladies' heads. It was all a bit primitive, but that good spirits prevailed was happily proved since the next morning our host made me a present of a bottle of whiskey which was a welcome addition to our supplies because the next day was very rough going on account of the snow.

We had already passed, in different places, three dead sleigh-dogs—most probably deliberately killed by some fiend with an ungovernable temper who found them difficult to handle. It is well known that sleigh-dogs can be most exasperating, but only a man of an elementarily cruel and callous nature could beat a dog to death. Sad to relate, however, there were a good many men of this type to be met on the Skagway-Dawson winter trail.

About four o'clock we were pushing on as fast as we could to reach Cormack's Post before dark when we came across a dead mule. I had a brain-wave—here at last was food that our dogs would eat. Meat was

what they wanted, so we stopped and, taking our axe from the sleigh, chopped off a large portion of the hind quarter. That night we thawed it out, cooked it a little, and gave each dog a small portion to begin with. They devoured it ravenously ; our trouble was now over so far as their food was concerned. I went back to the mule carcass the next morning and chopped off as much more meat as we could carry, and we found that by mixing rice and bacon with the meat in a stew the dogs soon began to eat it up clean.

My "tendon achilles" were now troubling me and causing a bit of pain and lameness, but I procured some water whenever I could at night and soaked my feet and massaged the tendons and was soon all right again.

Neither of us will forget one of the road-houses at which we stopped. We had heard that it was to be avoided, but that was not possible since the road-houses were distributed at intervals of roughly 22 miles on the northern end of the route. Island Post was the name of this undesirable place and it consisted of one small log cabin. It was dark when we arrived. Having found some shelter for our dogs we went in. A small table was built out from the wall. The floor was ordinary gravel, no boards. The furnishings were merely six dirty-looking bunks with spruce poles to lie on, a filthy stove and cooking-table. The two men running the show were indescribably dirty—long uncombed hair, unshaven, with a high-water mark of grease round

their mouths, short Mackinaw coats with the collars turned up round their ears, hands filthy. Bergeson and I exchanged glances—our dogs were clean and comfortable compared to this. The thought of eating food prepared by these men was revolting. What were we to do? Finally, the "tin hat" was put on everything when they dragged out from underneath one of the bunks a disgusting piece of moose meat, black in appearance and covered with dirt and gravel from the floor. From this they began to cut pieces of meat to cook for supper without any attempt at washing it. That settled me and helped to appease my hunger. We saw some stewed prunes in a bucket on the table and these and a cup of muddy coffee was all we could tackle for supper. I prayed for the night to pass quickly so that we could get away; we arranged to leave at daybreak without breakfast, press on to the next stop and indulge in a double feed. This we did and were thankful to leave Island Post behind us.

Our stamina was consistently improving and we were finding the day's journey accomplished without much actual fatigue, but my appetite at night was almost insatiable and Bergeson held up his end very well, too.

Our three faithful sleigh-dogs were becoming as keen as mustard, particularly the leader, Old Kruger. Rich, which was more of an Irish setter than a Llewellyn and was of a slighter build than the other two, was never a very strong puller in the collar, but he did his

best. After about ten days out Faro began to improve very rapidly and enjoyed running with the sleigh either in front or behind for an hour or so. One day, however, when the trail led through some thickly timbered spruce country, Faro left the trail suddenly and disappeared barking into the wood. No amount of whistling was of any avail ; from the barking it was evident he was getting farther and farther away. This was most exasperating as it delayed us considerably and we didn't want to go on and leave the dog, lest he might not follow. I told Bergeson to wait and went after him into the woods. The going was very heavy, but I could follow the trail easily. Barking was going on only at intervals now, so that I hoped the rabbit or whatever it was he was chasing had got well away from him. Anyhow, after having chased him for three-quarters of an hour, I rounded him up and had a most difficult job to lay hands on him. Afterwards we found that this was one of Faro's most annoying characteristics. He would disappear into the woods at the most awkward moments and on one occasion kept our steamer waiting about two hours when ascending the McMillan River.

Every day now we were on the look out for any suspicious or armed men and we were anxious to obtain any news we could about the supposed murder, but so far no one at all had passed us going in either direction. We were told in Skagway that at Yukon Crossing we should find the best road-house of the lot and so it

proved to be. The proprietor was a river pilot, by name Captain Johnson, whom I knew. The house was excellently built of logs, plenty of room and everything spotlessly clean ; a white cloth on the dining-room table, and one or two separate rooms with real beds and mattresses, also good out-houses for horses and dogs and a small liquor bar, which did a big trade.

We learned from Captain Johnson that it was believed the R.N.W.M. police had arrested a man under suspicious circumstances back near Lake Bennett. In any event three men had disappeared from the Dawson-Bennett trail, one being named W. Clayson, a well-known business man in Skagway and Dawson, whom I had met on my way out in October and at whose store in Skagway I had made various purchases for this trip. Another man who had disappeared was a young fellow named Relfe. I knew this lad very well, indeed, he was a gold dust weigher in the Dominion Saloon and had often relieved me of much dust in settlement for refreshments. The third man missing was named Olson, a Swede, who was in the employ of the Dominion Telegraph Company and whose job it was to patrol the telegraph-line for a certain number of miles north and south of Fort Selkirk. We were told that some of the R.N.W.M. police together with a detective were searching the country in the immediate vicinity of Minto, Hootchikoo and Selkirk. This was all the news we could find out for the present.

After leaving Yukon Crossing the weather began to get very much colder ; up to the present it had averaged 25° below zero. As the temperature fell further, travelling became more unpleasant, icicles continually forming on our moustaches ; our noses and cheeks froze in small patches from time to time. We were compelled to wear our " drill parkeys " with their fur-lined hood, which were pulled over our fur caps and drawn in closely to the mouth with a tape. Round our waists we wore coloured knitted sashes to prevent the air from circulating under the parkey. Our dogs felt the increasing cold, too, and we had to exercise much care with their feet, as ice kept forming between their toes, which, if not removed, would have caused the feet to freeze. We had brought a few pairs of dog's moccasins with us in case of very severe weather and after leaving Fort Selkirk these had to be used. It was comical to watch the dogs the first time they were put on ; they lifted up their forefeet in the most approved hackney style and reminded me when a boy of putting walnut shells on our cat's paws.

About our sixteenth day from Bennett we arrived early in the morning at Hootchikoo. We were now almost on the scene of the supposed murder and were pricking up our ears. We found out at Hootchikoo that some of the police were at work near Minto and that we should get all the latest news from them. On approaching Minto the trail took us along, and then

across, the frozen Yukon. When coming from the timber into the open we saw in the distance two men out on the ice playing about with or handling what looked like a rope. On coming up to them we found they were Sergeant Barker and Constable Pennycuik of the R.N.W.M. police ; they were standing over a large hole in the ice and were operating a grappling-iron in an attempt to locate the bodies of the three men who had disappeared and it was suspected had been murdered by the man O'Brien (who had been detained at Bennett and who was now being brought back over the trail to Selkirk) and another man named Graves, who was his partner. Graves had disappeared. We learned later that O'Brien and his escort were close behind us and were expected to pass Minto that day, so we decided to spend the night at the road-house there and hear as much as we could about this ghastly tragedy. The weather was bitterly cold—42° below zero—and we were glad to seek shelter in the small but fairly comfortable house presided over by my friend Captain Fussel (also a steam-boat skipper).

It was exciting and a little eerie to be seated in that lone cabin, a dot in a white vastness, and listen to the then unpublished details of such a gruesome tragedy. It is one of the nights that stand out vividly in my memory—the plain interior, the swinging oil-lamp, the glow from the roaring stove and the smoke from our pipes hanging on the thickening atmosphere as the

voice of Sergeant Baker led us over some of the steps the police had taken in tracking down this inhuman monster. It was a story that sounded like a thriller-novel at its best, but how greatly is the drama of any happening increased when it happens on one's own doorstep, so to speak.

Pause, too, awhile and listen to what was the most cold-blooded crime the Yukon has ever known.

CHAPTER IX

THE YUKON'S GREATEST CRIME

QUITE possibly but for a paragraph in a newspaper the crime would never have happened. This item told how Clayson had sold his business in Dawson and was "going outside" with something in the neighbourhood of \$30,000 in his possession. The writer rather inferred that the man was actually carrying that much money with him, and it is established that if he did not have it all on his person, he was in possession of quite a considerable amount. Relfe, also, was well breeched.

The latter had set out from Dawson on foot, but Clayson rode a bicycle, the weather being mild and the trail in fairly good shape. He overtook the younger man at Selkirk and from this place they proceeded in company with Olson, the Swede.

It was Christmas Eve when they foregathered and they seem to have celebrated the occasion. A merry evening was little likely to affect their journey—men did not have to go into training those days before taking any trail!

So off they set quite early on Christmas morning,

stating they intended pulling up for the night at that same Minto road-house where we had stayed.

But they never arrived there, indeed they were never seen alive again.

And such were the conditions in that wide-flung country that no one would have been any the wiser—not for months anyway—unless a sister of Clayson's, who had expected him 500 miles away at Skagway, had not grown anxious at his non-arrival. Naturally it was a fortnight or so before her anxieties were aroused, then she wired Dawson to know if her brother had actually left town as he had intended.

That inquiry set the police to work. What had happened to Clayson? More, what had become of Relfe and Olson? The wires were kept busy seeking any one of the three and soon it looked fairly certain all had disappeared. It was conceivable, of course, that they had been overtaken by some disaster—winter in the Klondike had a good many dangers ready-made for lonely travellers.

At headquarters of the North-West Mounted, information was laid and Constable Pennycuick was dispatched a distance of 200 miles from where he was to Minto—a trip over the ice which he made by dog-team in the remarkable time of sixty hours. Good going, believe me.

Pennycuick at once wired north and south for all posts to keep a wary eye on travelling strangers and put them through a searching examination. It is

amazing how much these "mounties" accomplished in the wild lands. The Royal Canadians, their natural successors to-day, have a grand record—it is said they always get their man—but over a quarter of a century ago the police worked under greater handicaps since communications were of the sketchiest description. Pennycuik, for instance, had to travel from Minto to Fort Selkirk before he could get in touch with a telegraph. But he did succeed in sending out an "all station" call in quick time—and the very next day saw results.

Into Bennett, three hundred miles away, walked a man accompanied by a horse sleigh, a dog and an Indian woman. Without any special reason it is likely enough this man would have been questioned, for it was by no means a usual sight for a man "camping on the trail" to possess a good horse as well as a dog. But with the warning out, a constable was soon in the road-house. His quick eye noticed that the stranger—a small slender man with black beard turning grey and narrow, keen dark eyes—was wearing suspiciously new fur cap and coat while he had on old shoes covered with moccasins.

"What is your name?" he asked, in unconcerned manner.

"Ross," came the reply.

"Where do you come from?"

"Dawson."

"When?"

"Three weeks ago."

"Where did you get your horse?"

"Bought him at Tagish."

"Where did you get the woman?"

"At Tagish also!"

"Where are you taking her?"

"To Skagway."

"Did you come from Tagish to Dawson with the dog?"

"Yes."

"Then why did you buy the horse? The dog isn't sick."

"To sell him at Skagway. I hear they bring high prices there. Besides it is easier for the girl," he added as an afterthought.

Which was but another fact to increase the constable's doubts for he knew well enough that, in the North, Indian women are accustomed to walk behind or pull the sleighs and not to ride on them. He made no comment, but proceeded with his examination.

"Where have you been since you left Dawson? It would not take you three weeks to reach here with that fine dog of yours?"

Ross hesitated before explaining:

"I've been stopping with the girl's people at Tagish for a week. Why do you ask these questions?"

"Oh, nothing?" replied the constable. "When are you going on?"

"Right away, as soon as I've had a drink and something to eat. . . . Have a drink?"

"No thanks."

The constable reflected for a few minutes while Ross took his refreshment. He was not at all satisfied that Ross was straight.

"I think you had better come over to the police post with me," he said when Ross had finished.

"Very well," said Ross, "only I don't understand what you are driving at. What will I do with my outfit?"

"We'll look after that."

The horse and dog were taken into the police post, the woman sent to a nearby Indian encampment and Ross walked into the guard-room—never to emerge a free man again!

The first thing to be done was to check up on the apparently simple statements Ross had made about his journey. The Post wired to Tagish Lake and the answer hammered the first nail in the stranger's coffin. This was the answer:

Man named Ross with sled and dog came here last week. Stayed two days. Bought new fur cap and coat at Houker's store. Paid \$400 for two horses and bought Indian girl from father for \$150. Said came from Dawson and going Atlin across lake. Seemed anxious to get away.

They were beginning to uncover the lies. Inspector Scarth of Bennett began to reflect. Where was the second horse? And why if he set out for Atlin had he come to Bennett? The two routes were far apart. He wired Pennycuik for further information and by now the constable had made a few discoveries which he at once communicated to Scarth.

Evidence showed that two men had camped somewhere on the trail from Selkirk to Minto—one small and dark, the other large and dark, the former named O'Brien, the latter Graves—and that no trace could be found of them. "If encountered—detain," concluded the message.

Small and dark—that might be this man Ross, thought Scarth, as he eyed the fellow still in the ward-room, stolidly seated, saying nothing and appearing to be sleepy. Add to that the fact that he had lied about his route, also that he—a "camper"—had sufficient money to buy horses and the Indian woman. The Inspector's conclusions were grave enough to make him try to catch Ross with a bluff.

"O'Brien, where is Graves?" he demanded sharply.

The man who called himself Ross lost all his pose of unconcern. He sprang from the bench like a wild cat and faced the officer with cold fiendish eyes. After a moment, however, he controlled himself.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Just what I said; Where is Graves?"

He deemed it inadvisable to say anything about the missing men for the time being.

Ross had the appearance of a trapped animal. He glanced about the place, but the Inspector had taken the precaution of having four burly policemen just within the doorway. If, as appeared, Ross was contemplating making a dash for it, he hadn't a chance. All the windows were barred and, moreover, all around was heavy snow and Bennett was hemmed in on every side by high mountains, devoid of shelter and penetratingly cold. Scarth said afterwards one could read his thoughts from his expression. Evidently having summed up the possibilities he realised there was no escape so he answered truculently :

"You can all go to hell," and sat down. He refused to utter another word.

Search of the sledge he had brought in revealed two rifles and a pistol with plenty of ammunition—but that was not nearly as damning as the discovery later that in one of his double leather-soled boots were \$1200 in American notes and in the butt of his revolver, which unscrewed, there was another \$400.

The Indian girl supplied further evidence that Ross was lying. She said that they had started with two horses, but one was drowned on thin ice giving way and she added that they were making for an Indian encampment near Bennett. Also she confirmed the

statement that they had been only two days in Tagish and not a week as Ross had said.

Scarth had no doubt that his prisoner was O'Brien. But what had become of the three missing men? And where could Graves be?

Headquarters realised that the services of a more or less trained detective was urgent. Such a man had been attached to Dawson, but had recently resigned and gone outside. His name was Maguire and he had proved to be particularly clever in his profession.

His services were telegraphed for and he returned to his old pals by the next steamer. On arrival at Bennett, Maguire interviewed O'Brien, but the latter was sullen and dangerous and the detective could get nothing out of him. He therefore proceeded to Minto, since it was near this place that the four men had left the world.

On the face of it the outlook was pretty hopeless. It was February now and the men had disappeared on Christmas Day. During that six weeks all visible traces had long ago been obliterated by heavy falls of snow. Moreover, no one at Minto seemed to have taken any notice of the two campers; didn't even know where their tent had been pitched. Once or twice they had come into the store to exchange canned goods for tobacco and those were the only occasions when they were seen. They said they had no money—an important point later—and were chopping wood ready for the river steamers in the coming summer,

Maguire found their tent. That was remarkable enough, for poor campers don't leave their tents behind them when they move ; even when contemplating "going outside," they always try to make a deal of their meagre possessions with some handy prospector or trading post. But the detective's quick eyes read far more into what he saw than the hasty departure of the owners.

He found that trees had been cut in such a manner as to afford the occupiers of that tent a commanding view both up and down the trail without themselves being seen. It looked clear enough that all these arrangements were carried out for the one purpose of robbery.

Maguire, of course, knew that there must be a path from tent to trail—about a quarter of a mile. He started shovelling the snow, hoping to strike the hardness which the men's feet would have created. It was a laborious job and he was working entirely alone in that white waste except for his dog—a huskie—who after a time seemed anxious to help his master and commenced to paw up the snow.

And it was the dog that made the discovery which in the end resulted in the whole callous tale coming to light.

On the fifth day, Maguire noticed the huskie had his nose buried in the snow and was evidently interested in a scent. Pushing it away he dropped to his knees and

with his hands scooped out the snow where the animal had been burrowing. A chunk that was hard and icy was thus uncovered and this Maguire preserved, taking it to Minto and thawing it out. The fluid was sent in a bottle to Vancouver for analysis. In a few days Maguire received the analyst's succinctly dramatic report by wire :

"This sample contains human blood."

He sent for Pennycuick and then commenced a search which for keenness, ingenuity and devotion to duty can rarely have been surpassed. For three weeks Maguire and Pennycuick worked on their hands and knees around that tent. Every bit of snow was sifted and examined before being put aside, and you have to remember that the thermometer stood round about 40° below zero ! Gradually they reconstructed the ground to what it had been on Christmas Day—that is they opened up the path from tent to the main trail and found many indications that pointed the details of what surely was one of the most callous of murders in criminal history.

It transpired that Graves had seen Clayson, Relfe and Olson in Selkirk. No doubt also he had read of the money they were carrying, at all events he invited them to take a Christmas drink in the tent. On Christmas Day he went out and met them on the trail pointing the way to the camp. Clayson entered the path first

with his bicycle, Relfe was second, then Olson, Graves bringing up the rear. As Clayson came round a bend O'Brien coolly shot him with a rifle from behind a tree. Maguire decided it was O'Brien because they discovered just where a cleft had been cut in which to rest the rifle and it was exactly the height of O'Brien's shoulder, Graves being a much taller man. Moreover, their painstaking investigation had unearthed at the foot of the tree an empty shell case that fitted the rifle which O'Brien had when arrested. And how they knew it was Clayson who led the little procession, and so became the first victim, was because his cycle's wheel-tracks stopped at the spot where the first blood was found.

One can picture the instant confusion that resulted from the first murder. The other two visitors could have had no possible doubt that they were doomed to a similar fate. They had been trapped into this path—where single-file order was inevitable owing to its narrowness—for the one purpose of murder and robbery and there is something extremely revolting in the thought that these honest travellers had been lured by the request to share a Christmas drink. Could infamy go further?

Relfe was the only member of the trio who was armed. He carried a revolver, but before he could draw it apparently O'Brien shot him without moving from his tree. The bullet did not kill him, so O'Brien promptly ran up and shot him through the head. The

story was all written in the snow and ice. At the spot where he fell a bullet was found flattened in the frozen muck with a fragment of bone attached and part of a tooth with gold filling which had been put in Relfe's mouth by a Dawson dentist shortly before. Nearby was picked up an empty 40-82 cartridge thrown out by O'Brien after he had shot Relfe the second time.

Meanwhile, Olson had turned to make his escape. Graves stopped him and a mighty struggle must have taken place, because when the ground was cleared the snow was beaten into ice over a goodly radius. The struggle was evidently ended by O'Brien. The fact that three empty cartridge-cases belonging to his rifle were found just here suggested that he ran up to assist his partner and shot the Swede three times.

This was the place where Maguire's dog had sniffed Olson's blood six weeks after he had been killed.

The three bodies were evidently stripped and dragged naked to the river. In the ice a hole was cut down to the running water and they were thrown in.

The murderers thought, no doubt, that the deep current under the ice of the Yukon would carry the bodies to the Behring Sea and they would be seen no more. But there is a very true saying in the North that the Yukon always gives up its dead—and so it proved in this case.

Olson's body was found at Forty Mile Post (60 miles south of Dawson City). Clayson's was recovered at

Circle City in Alaska, and Relfe's came to the surface a week later near the Yukon Flats, 500 miles away.

When the murderers had disposed of the bodies they gathered all the clothing and burnt it. Among the ashes were found eyelets from the felt shoes they were wearing, a garter of Clayson's, a black button and a safety-pin—all belonging to the dead men.

Also, crumpled up and thrown in a clump of bushes near the tent, was a receipt given that morning by Captain Russell, the proprietor of the Minto road-house, for \$6 for meals—O'Brien had forgotten to throw this in the fire.

There was only one insecure link in the chain of evidence. How could it be proved that this was in fact the tent occupied by O'Brien and Graves? The assumption was obvious enough, but the law demands proof before hanging a man. These two officers, it is clear, possessed more than patience and courage; they had imagination. For they conceived the idea of fetching O'Brien's dog all the way from Bennett, taking him into the vicinity of the tent and commanding him to "go home." He made straight for the tent—which was not visible to him—and when the officers followed they found him curled up very much at home.

And one more point. Later on Maguire found in the ice near the river bank a double-bitted axe nicked in the centre. This fitted the cuts in the trees where

O'Brien rested his rifle, nicks and all, and it was abundantly proved that the axe was his. He bought it at Forty Mile and tried to get it sharpened in Dawson on the way out.

With regard to Graves—Maguire in his evidence at the conclusion of the trial said : " With the aid of the Government at Ottawa we have for a year searched all over the world. We know where he came from ; we know his antecedents, but he has disappeared for ever since that Christmas Day—only O'Brien and God know where he is."

The prisoner in his cell denied everything, but refused to take the stand and testify even in an attempt to save his own life.

He was found guilty and hanged in Dawson City.

After his conviction he tried to strangle the clergyman who proffered him religious consolation and he also made an attempt to assassinate his guard.

Of the preliminaries of all this we heard that night from Sergeant Barker—and of much more, for he was a good story-teller and his experiences included going through the Zulu War and many years as a " Mounty " also. I was sorry when we wished each other good-bye early the next morning. From time to time I saw a good deal of Sergeant Barker while he was stationed in Dawson, but when he was moved I neither saw nor heard of him again.

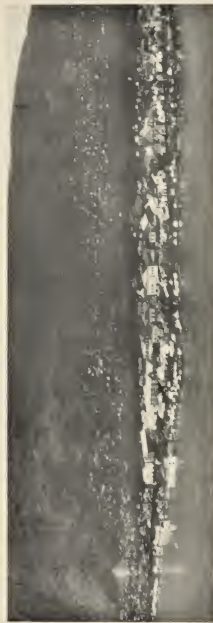
There were days after that when, the trail being good



My claim No. 4 below discovery, winter of 1898. Hoisting out rich pay gravel and thawing gravel with wood fires.



Another view of same claim—lower reef, joining No. 5 below discovery.



Dawson City and water's front, summer 1898.



Another view of Dawson City showing mouth of the Klondike River.

and the weather not too cold, we covered over 40 miles. The going appeared to be harder on the dogs than ourselves, although neither of us ever sat in the sleigh during the whole journey, and most of the time we took turns pushing on the handlebars to help the dogs.

It was bitterly cold with a slight breeze blowing when we arrived at Fort Selkirk. We put up at the Savoy Hotel—a road-house and trading-post combined ! And here's an interesting fact. This post was one of many others situated in different parts of British Columbia and the North-west Territories belonging to the British American Corporation, which was one of Whitaker Wright's companies. Whoever advised this company in their selection of posts knew their job. I can say it with much confidence that if the right man had been placed in control, and the business as originally outlined had been enlarged, the B.A.C. Company would have controlled the entire fur-trading business in the Yukon Territory and probably in Northern British Columbia as well. They could also have established large stores in Whitehorse and elsewhere dealing with all sorts of merchandise, and selling not only through their own trading-posts but to the large mining interests which developed later and which have made a fortune for men who took over the B.A.C. Company's business when it went into liquidation.

I found on arrival at Selkirk that my money was running short ; it was costing far more than I had

anticipated to travel over the trail with a dog team. Meals and beds were terribly expensive. A piece of pie and a cup of coffee cost 6s., an ordinary meal 10s. (beans and bacon or moose meat and stewed fruit), a bed or bunk 8s. I calculated our expenses came to about £2 5s. per day up to the time we arrived at Fort Selkirk, and as I had only provided myself with \$200 for the entire trip, we were practically broke with still 176 miles to go.

The manager of the hotel was a big burly red-headed and red-bearded Scotsman named Muggeridge. I explained my position to him, told him who I was and where I was going, that I banked with B.N.A. in Dawson and with the same firm in Vancouver and asked for the loan of \$100.

"Certainly, certainly," he said, "you had better take \$200 and be sure that you have enough in case you meet a long spell of the weather we are now having and are unable to travel."

This was indeed most generous and trusting. I gave him the necessary IOU, which was repaid the day after my arrival in Dawson. The night of our arrival in Fort Selkirk the temperature dropped to 55° below zero so we decided to wait over here for another day and rest ourselves and the dogs, it being really too cold to travel, particularly for the dogs.

O'Brien arrived under police escort that day. Desperate as he proved to be, there was little chance of effecting

an escape for here existed a remarkably adequate barracks—the reason for which, by the way, was most interesting.

It may not be generally known to readers that soon after the discovery of gold in the Klondike a secret society was formed with a most ambitious programme. This was nothing short of seizing the country. Dawson City was to be captured by force and the mines on Bonanza and Eldorado Creek taken over. The headquarters of the Royal West Mounted was to be rounded up and the men as well as all the Government officials were to be sent down the river. This was no fairy tale. I myself saw an impression of a seal used by this amazing organisation. It was circular and round the edge bore the inscription: THE ORDER OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN. At the bottom was the word SEATTLE and in the centre the numeral 2, above which was an impression of a pair of scales. The thing obviously belonged to a member of the Seattle branch.

The plot came to light and was considered by the authorities to be of such a far-reaching and dangerous character that Ottawa decided to send an expeditionary force into the Yukon to rout it out. Hence the barracks at Selkirk, which was made headquarters of the force. It went north over the Stickine trail and must have cost a fortune, so bad was that route. But the money was well spent, since the daring venture was defeated.

To return to O'Brien Bergeson and I wanted to have

a look at this creature, so we walked across to the then practically deserted barracks and, getting in touch with the Sergeant-in-charge, we were told we could have a look at the prisoner about 4.30, when he would be taken into the prison yard for exercise. We duly saw him. He was quite short and well proportioned, carried himself smartly with a quick short step, and from general appearances I'm certain he had had military training. His nose was thin and fairly prominent, hair grizzled, with a close-cropped and pointed beard turning grey, and dark small determined-looking eyes. He was like a caged wolf and spoke to no one. He gave me the impression of a man who had been well educated. He was certainly not of the labouring class. Such in appearance was the coldest-blooded murderer the Yukon has ever known.

We waited two days at Fort Selkirk, but as the cold spell showed no immediate signs of abatement we decided to risk it and push on.

We left on the morning of March 8th with the temperature 55° below zero. Neither of us is likely to forget this day ; the trail led round a high bluff of rock about three miles below Selkirk and then down a narrow ravine. Here we encountered a slight breeze ; it was terribly cold. We could progress at only a slow walking pace ; the poor dogs' whiskers and eyelashes were coated with hoar frost. Every few minutes Bergie and I would turn our backs to the breeze for a short

spell and we were constantly watching each other's faces (or what we could see of them) for frostbite. My knees had every symptom of freezing although I kept rubbing them constantly with my fur mitts. I was wearing a pair of buckskin riding-breeches made with continuations. These were invaluable to me on the journey, but during that bitter spell with wind nothing but fur or thick Mackinaw with heavy woollen underclothes could have kept out the cold. At a later period, when out in intense cold, I always wore knee-caps made of musk rat skin, which proved to be an excellent protection.

Faro was looking so well and eating his meals up cleanly every night, that we decided to harness him the day we left Selkirk. We put him in the wheel, which was always his usual position for many years afterwards. Directly we started off he leapt into the collar barking and biting at the dogs' heels in front of him and practically pulled the whole load for a bit. He seemed to be bursting with energy and good spirits, and this was his usual procedure ever afterwards unless someone cracked a dog-whip or hit him, and then he would go into his shell like a tortoise, would sulk for hours and never pull a pound. I could get him out of these spells only by making much of him and cheering him up, running ahead of the team and pretending there was game in sight and so on. His was a peculiar temperament, something like my own—he could be led but not driven.

It is a pleasant reflection that after many hard years of summer and winter work in carrying heavy packs and hauling big loads in the Upper McMillan country Faro spent his last years in peace and plenty on my ranch at Shawnigan Lake, Vancouver Island.

When we had been on the trail 22 days we arrived at the sixty-mile road-house. From there it is exactly 48 miles to Dawson. The trail was said to be splendid, a great deal of it traversing the actual surface of the river. The water having frozen fairly smoothly for many miles at intervals without any pressure ridges, we decided, being now so hard, fit and tireless, to try to do that final stretch in one day. We gave our dogs an extra good feed of caribou meat, and taking the same ourselves, we started off at 7.30 a.m. The temperature was quite mild—11° below zero. We made excellent time. Bergie and I took it in turns to run at a jog-trot in front of the dogs, which always made them keen. By noon we had covered 20 miles odd. We had a good meal at Indian River Post, giving the dogs a light feed and a good drink, and then off we went on the last dash.

At 7.30 we pulled up in front of Tom Chisholme's saloon and shortly the big, jovial Tom came out at my request to show me where we could find a comfortable night's lodging and a big feed for the dogs. Having seen that they had warm beds of straw, we stood Tom and some of his friends a drink or two, then went to the New MacDonald Hotel, which had been opened since

we went outside and was the property of Big Alec MacDonald, "The Klondike King," where we got a very comfortable room each and a bit of a wash—neither of us had taken our clothes off for 22 days so one can imagine washing was desirable, and urgent. But we were so ravenously hungry, I made up my mind to have a good feed first, then spend about an hour in a bath-tub, put on some clean underclothes and go to bed. I had no pyjamas with me.

In those days, having spent two summers and a winter in Dawson and being the representative of a gold-mining company owning valuable property, one knew and was known by a great number of men, particularly by the small coterie of impecunious remittance men whom one seems to find in every British Dominion and who frequently attempt to prey on their more fortunate countrymen. I met two of these lads, who were already well known in Dawson, the moment I entered the MacDonald Hotel ; they were enjoying the warmth of the stove which can be found in the centre of the entrance hall in front of the hotel clerk's counter in every Western hotel. This position gives a splendid vantage point for these "birds of prey," and I was accordingly pounced upon and made much of—how splendid to have me back again and how was dear old England and did I go here and did I go there ?

Of course all these protestations of undying friendship and joy at my return meant that food and drink had

to be proffered, and there was no getting away from it. I was caught just outside the hotel restaurant, so the anxiously anticipated invitation was forthcoming and in we went. I began to feel now that the two drinks I had had with Tom Chisholme had gone to my head. Not having touched any liquor to speak of for 22 days and then taking a couple of whiskies and going into a hot stuffy room made me feel what might be termed a bit "tight." However, this soon disappeared with food.

Of course throughout the journey our meals usually consisted of plain though generous helpings of meat, bread, dried fruit or whatever the road-houses offered. This night I saw we were up against the usual hotel menu and was much interested to see what Bergie would make of it. I remember the first course was "boiled salmon belly," of which we were both very fond, and Bergie was given a portion about the size of a large postage stamp. He looked at it and a huge grin spread all over his face. "What the —— name have they given me? What is it? I ordered a salmon belly—— Say kid," he said to the waiter, "bring me a dozen of these." An ordinary salmon belly makes a reasonable meal for one man and this is what Bergie expected.

Our remittance men were quite happy and went through the whole menu, all the while keeping us amused. It cannot be denied that a great many of these waifs and strays are most entertaining conversationalists.

CHAPTER X

OLD KLONDIKE CHARACTERS

OLD-TIMERS will, of course, be specially interested in recalling some of the strange characters who left their mark on the Klondike in the early golden days. Yet they are universal in their intrigue, queer products of a period and a mood—a period of lust and licence combined with high adventure and great comradeship ; a mood when the mind of the best was wont to get unhinged a little by success or failure. Few men, though coldly balanced and even in the civilised walks of life, can stand the glamour of success without change ; out there the man that the fever attracted was not of that calculating type which might be expected to take the ups and downs with equanimity ; they were, on the contrary, just the sort to plunge into the slough of despond or to taste the dregs of excess. There were few philosophers in the Klondike in '98, but a lot of bad hats—and bad heads ! Meet a few.

It is difficult to know how to select the dramatis personæ, so many pass across the stage of one's memory. Let me then go back to the beginning.

One of the first sights that met my eyes on Bonanza was a mule laden with sacks of gold dust. It was being led by a huge man. He was ponderous in every way—speech, appearance and manner. Two men armed with rifles accompanied him by way of escort, though there was little use in their presence since no one could very well steal and get away with some \$50,000 worth of gold dust. We stayed and talked. And thus I met Alec MacDonald, known for years as the “King of the Klondike,” or “Big Alec.”

What a romance of success and tragedy his life was !

The former consisted simply in the fact that he struck it extremely lucky—so lucky that he was offered no less than \$3,000,000 for his claims and thought so well of them that he refused, holding out for twice that sum. That was in London, whither he went with his partner on a sort of colossal joy-ride in '99. He certainly found happiness in the metropolis even if he did not obtain a purchaser at his own tremendous figure. He met a charming girl and married her. They eventually returned to Dawson, where he built the MacDonald Hotel, living in handsome rooms on the first floor.

Before he went to Europe he had donated \$50,000 to a Roman Catholic hospital, and as a result of this he was granted an audience by the Pope, who gave him an order of which he was very proud. It looked as if Big Alec had everything the heart could desire—wealth, honour, happiness. But he was not satisfied ; perhaps

it was not his nature to stand still. His big frame was full of vitality and, too, he liked to be "in the news."

At all events he started buying rather wildly, expecting that, as hitherto, everything he touched would turn to gold. It didn't. He had been provident enough to take out insurance on his own life and his wife's; then he spent wildly in purchasing claims in many outlying districts. He also speculated rather disastrously. The time soon came when he was finding it hard to hand out the money for his insurance premiums. Like many others who had flung wide their arms in careless prodigality on the crest of the wave, he discovered there was an incline on the other side. Down this he slithered.

His Bonanza claim was the best one he owned, but this had been worked extensively in '97 and '98, and by '99 it was almost finished. None of his new ventures proved of any value. He had twenty claims on Henderson Creek which was said to have prospected very well. I bought two claims on this creek joining Big Alec's in case it should turn out to be of any value. I paid \$500 for my two and Alec \$20,000 for his lot. No values were ever found on this creek to make it worth while to work.

Big Alec's finances became desperate until he was practically "broke."

Here comes the tragedy. Picture the man who had been king setting out all but penniless into the unknown.

He was not the sort to whine, but he must have been heavy of mind that day when he hiked out on a trail for the mountains. Still, he had talked optimistically enough; he was certain that he would find another Bonanza. From what was learned afterwards he located a claim on Clearwater Creek and there he built a small cabin and started prospecting. He was entirely alone, which must have come hard after his gay life in Dawson and his memories of Europe and its glitter.

For months nothing was heard of him. People didn't worry. Big Alec was capable of taking care of himself; everyone thought he was as hard as nails, physically as strong as an ox. But two prospectors chancing to follow in his footsteps—lured that way perhaps by the phenomenal luck of Alec and hoping to pick up some crumbs—came upon his lonely cabin. And stretched in front of it a body! It was Big Alec, quite dead. Beside him lay a double-bitted axe and some stove wood which he had evidently been splitting when he dropped. No need to enlarge on the tragic symbolism of that scene—the one-time king dying as he struggled to cut wood to keep himself warm, all alone, searching for gold he had once so generously squandered. Both his luck and his heart had gone back on him.

Everyone who knew Frank Slavin—the heavy-weight boxing champion of Australia, and who fought some

desperate battles for the world title, notably against Peter Jackson—either personally or by repute may be interested to hear of some of his experiences during the early days of the Klondike Gold Rush.

As a youth I had always taken a very keen interest in boxing, but I certainly never expected to meet one of the Old Guard, such as Frank Slavin, in an Arctic wilderness. In his prime Slavin must have been a splendid specimen of a man and a great fighter. What stamina they had in his day when contests lasted for hours !

I came across him in a saloon bar in Dawson City in '98. He was dressed in the ordinary rough mining-clothes, overalls, shirt and slouch hat. He was still a splendidly made man—tall, back as straight as an arrow, long loose arms and legs, broad across the shoulders, neck straight and head well balanced, agile-looking in every way.

What arrested my attention most of all were his small half-closed eyes, as if he were for ever trying to prevent flies or dust from getting into them. He had always a pleasant smile, and was a great favourite among his many friends.

Frank, in partnership with the late Lieutenant-Colonel Boyle (Canadian Forces), who during the Great War became more or less of a romantic figure owing to his close friendship with the Roumanian Royal Family and his work in connection with the dismantling of

the Roumanian Oil Wells, had been prospecting all over the Klondike goldfields. They had staked out valuable areas for dredging and hydraulic mining. These concessions at a later date became enormously valuable, but poor Frank made little or nothing out of them, and in '98 found himself very hard up.

One night about this time Frank was drinking in the Monte Carlo saloon with a lot of miners, and got fairly well "oiled"—an unusual experience for him. How or why, or what the argument was about, no one seemed to know, but suddenly a few rough words were heard and the next moment a big, burly-looking chap was hammering Frank all round the saloon, finally knocking him down. This seemed to sober him, but he made no attempt to retaliate.

"My man," was all he said, "you can knock me about in a saloon when I'm drunk, but I'll show you what I can do to you in a ring when I'm sober."

There and then two or three spectators, well-known men in Dawson, arranged for a fight to take place between Frank and his assailant.

Up to this time, Frank had never engaged in any match in the Yukon, and probably 90 per cent of the miners were unaware of his identity. Anyway, the news spread like wild-fire all over the Klondike that Frank Slavin, the famous heavy-weight, was in Dawson and he would fight a man named Archie Hoffman who styled himself heavy-weight champion of the Pacific

Coast, the contest to take place on the stage in the Monte Carlo saloon on December 15th, at 8 p.m., price of admission \$15 and \$25.

The great day arrived. Men collected in the various drinking-places ; some had come a long journey from outlying creeks several days before the fight in order to make a real spree of the event.

There was much discussion as to the outcome. Many said Frank was too old and would get badly beaten ; that his opponent had fought and defeated so and so, and that the show would be a farce.

About 7.15 the Monte Carlo saloon commenced to fill with all sorts and descriptions of men, in all sorts and descriptions of clothes—furs, mackinaws, moccasins, fur caps, etc., men unshaven and unwashed, with long beards and long hair. The stage was quite small and just accommodated a 12-foot ring. There was barely room for the seconds at each corner as the rope almost touched the wings of the stage.

The theatre was—well, looking back it is difficult to think it was all true—just a cheap wooden building, big plate-glass windows in front, with the name of the saloon painted across each window at each side of the front entrance. Immediately on entering to the left was the long bar. Behind this could be seen the usual collection of long mirrors decorated with tinsel or coloured paper and reflecting rows of bottles and glasses. On the bar were the scales for weighing the gold dust,

in payment of drinks and cigars. Men always acted as bar-tenders and attired themselves in immaculate white linen aprons, white waistcoats, white shirts and cuffs, usually with a large diamond tiepin and diamond ring.

Passing through the bar one entered a small room which was devoted entirely to gambling ; roulette, poker, faro, poker-dice, keno, etc. Most of the games were crooked.

Beyond this, one entered the tawdry theatre. The seats on the ground floor or stalls consisted of movable forms which could be readily pushed out of the way, leaving space for dancing, which took place every night after the usual vaudeville show was over. Above was a narrow balcony with three rows of seats. At the end of this, on each side of the stage, were six boxes. Here the Klondike Kings would sit with the dancing-girls and expose champagne bottles to every one's view. It required a Klondike King to buy champagne in those days. Each quart cost about £12. When the " Kings " became incapable, empty champagne bottles were often filled with soda-water and sugar—and resold to them at £12 again !

The place was packed that night. At eight o'clock Hoffman stepped through the ropes amid much applause and took his seat in a corner of the ring, where his seconds bandaged his hands. He was a well set-up man about 5 feet 10 inches in height and weighed twelve or thirteen stone. At 8.5 Slavin was still missing and the



The Author's dog team which made the 600-mile journey from Bennett to Dawson; arrival on Cheechako Hill.
Charles Bergesen, the Author's companion on journey.



About to leave Fort Selkirk for Russell Creek; small steamer heavily loaded.
 Author extreme right, partner extreme left.



Tom Jeffreys, a French-Canadian trapper, who was found frozen to death
 in 1917, holding an "inconnu," a very rare fish.

audience became impatient, stamping, clapping, whistling, etc.

After this had died down, Slavin jumped briskly through the ropes. He was wearing a pair of white flannel trousers and a long white sweater with rolled-up collar, in contrast to which his opponent was in shorts and bare to the waist. They were then both introduced to the crowd in the usual way, after which the gloves were adjusted.

To my astonishment I saw Slavin's gloves being put on over his sweater and there he stood, the old war horse, with long white trousers, heavy white sweater, waiting to lick, or be licked by, the man who had handled him so roughly in the saloon bar.

Finally came the signal: Time—first round. The "Pacific Coast Champion" walked slowly towards the centre of the ring with his arms low and his gloves about on a level with the pit of his stomach. Slavin came out with his big stride, held up his left hand and moved it backwards and forwards, his right in the "ready" position. For the fraction of a second he stepped around his opponent, trying to size up the situation, and then—Bang! A terrific right swing to the jaw. The "Pacific Coast Champion" dropped like a log and was carried out of the ring! He had made no effort whatever to strike a single blow, and had the appearance of being paralysed with fear, and muscle-bound.

Slavin received £200 for this exhibition—and the next morning sent a draft to his wife in Victoria for £100.

Shortly after this, Slavin was matched against a young Australian from Gippsland, named Perkins. If anything, Perkins was a better proportioned man and heavier than Slavin, and twenty-five years of age. For fourteen rounds Perkins most courageously battled with Slavin, during which time he received terrific punishment, including a broken rib. At the end of the fourteenth round his seconds threw up the sponge. Poor Perkins was so badly hurt internally that he never really recovered and died about eighteen months afterwards.

But I think of all the romantic characters I met in the Klondike a certain member of the peerage stands out. I can't mention his name for the simple reason that he still lives, now happily married, following the ordinary life of a well-to-do man. In him one has a perfect illustration of the adventurous Englishman who was lured to the goldfields and, though he lost in the race for wealth, at least kept up his end as a sport and a man.

I'll call him Brodie ; that has almost the same twang of familiarity to which he used to answer so heartily in the Monte Carlo and the Zero Clubs in Dawson. Brodie ! And the last time I saw him was in Bond Street, fresh and smart in—yes, actually, silk hat, gloves, umbrella, morning coat and pin-striped trousers. What a step from mad old Dawson—and worse !

After Sandhurst and a space with his regiment abroad, Brodie came into money and tried his hand at business. "Something in the City" only resulted in a loss to him of nearly half his wealth. The balance he took out to British Columbia, investing it in a gold mine where the surface showing was extremely rich. For a time all went well. From shallow workings, over £10,000 was won, but then, to everyone's consternation, the reef, instead of behaving itself in the approved manner and going on deeper, came suddenly upwards again and dissipated itself on the surface. To be sure such experience is not by any means unknown, but, as Brodie said, it would have to happen to him; he must be a Jonah.

And, "of course," it was just as he was left practically penniless that the Klondike rush started.

He was determined to try again—the type of tale that was penetrating into the "outside" about the gold that was to be had for the stopping to pick up was irresistible to such a nature as Brodie's. He wired for assistance from England and set off, arriving in the autumn of '97. He built himself a small hut across the Yukon River and, obtaining a dog team, commenced a series of rushes hither and thither wherever rumour reported lucky strikes. He staked many useless claims in unknown creeks.

But he was always coming back to Dawson. If he "went places" he had to come back and "see things." Especially when one of his now-regular remittances

arrived from home. This was always a sure passport from the wilds to the town where he was as fond as anyone of indulging a night of hilarity in the saloons. It was after such a convivial evening one very dark night on the way back to his cabin that he fell down an open shaft. He broke his right ankle.

Fortunately a doctor friend was with him, but, unfortunately, the medico was not in the best shape to perform operations and the way he set poor Brodie's ankle has left him lame to this day.

It was in '99 that I first began to see much of him. He had purchased a claim on Quartz Creek and in going there and back to Dawson he frequently spent the night with me in Bonanza, when we always discussed each other's news and my whiskey until the small hours.

On one of these journeys of his into Dawson he purchased a pair of long rubber boots from a small store kept by a fat Jew. Paying for the things, he said he would pick them up on his way out later in the evening. The whole trouble that resulted was entirely due to the fact that Brodie did not notice that there were several similar stores next to each other and so, when he wandered back to the wrong one, he merely thought the Jew was lying and trying to cheat him out of his footgear. Hopes of an amicable understanding were not helped by the fact that Brodie was suffering from a too-joyous afternoon with his pals.

His temper flared. He called the old Jew every name

he could think of, and then proceeded to pitch all his goods and chattels out of the window and door into the street. The Jew went rushing down to the police barracks for help, saying a drunken man was throwing all his goods into the Yukon. Two N.W.M. policemen came along with the hand-cart which was ever ready for the removal of drunks. Brodie was thrown into this vehicle and was pushed off with his legs hanging over the side to the barracks, where he was placed in a cell to sober up. He was well known to all the police inspectors and frequently was asked to meals by Colonel Sam Steele and Captain Starnes, but he was drunk and had committed assault, so Colonel Steele thought it best to cool Brodie off in a cell.

Very soon some of the lads heard all about it and formed a relief party. This bunch was probably more drunk than the victim they were going to rescue, but off they went to the barracks and demanded speech with Captain Starnes asking for Brodie's instant release. These lads kicked up such a fuss that Starnes not only refused their request but decided to keep him in his cell overnight. And there he remained. When let out next day he was furious with his pals and told them never again to try and bail him out. He said he didn't mind the cell so much, but he was put in with a nigger and the latter took off his boots, which was almost more than he could bear !

Brodie left Dawson about 1900 and went to Fort

Selkirk where he bought an interest in a small trading store. In the winter months he pushed off into the wilderness of the Pelly and Upper McMillan Rivers trapping by himself and, strangest thing of all, his companion was a tabby cat. It went everywhere with him ; how he managed to keep it alive is a complete enigma to me.

I am afraid he was not a successful trapper. One winter's catch amounted to one lynx, one fox and one mink. He used to boast of this "bag" with huge delight. It is only fair to say that his trapping-grounds on that occasion were but a few miles from Fort Selkirk and that frequent and prolonged visits were paid to the store during the trapping season, where he enjoyed much conviviality with his partner and other resident traders, much liquor being consumed.

However, Brodie *did* journey forth alone for two winters to the Upper McMillan, where he put up with much cold, hardships and bad food. I located the cabin he built for himself, once on my down-river journey. In size it was about 8 feet by 8 feet, certainly not larger. It was necessary to crawl on one's hands and knees to get through the doorway. His stove and table, made of poles, were in easy reach of his bunk which was also made of poles covered with dry grass. He said truly that he could lie in his bunk, light his stove and cook his meals. By building a very small cabin he argued it was easier to keep warm. The roof was only about

5 feet 6 inches high from the gravel floor, so that it was impossible for him to stand erect in it anywhere. Anything more miserably uncomfortable it would be hard to imagine, yet he lived for two winters in this "dog kennel."

With his crippled foot and no prospect of doing any good for himself I had frequently advised him to go back to England where his mother was most anxious to see him, and for him to give up the life he was leading. She wrote and asked me to bring all the influence I could bear to induce him to go home, but for several years my efforts were unsuccessful. Finally in 1903, on my way out from Dawson to London, I found him at Fort Selkirk looking unwashed, unshaven and "tough," and after arguing with him strenuously for half an hour he suddenly said :

"Righto, I'll come back to the Old Country with you."

As the steamer was leaving in a few minutes there was no time for long farewells to his old trapping pals. He quickly bought a cheap suit-case, although at the moment he had nothing to put in it. He came on board just as he was with no baggage of *any* sort. He was wearing a pair of thick mackinaw trousers and a blue jersey, no coat or hat. He carried nothing but his empty suit-case which he said he would fill up when he got to Whitehorse or Vancouver. At the former place we rigged him out with some new underclothes

and a cheap suit and, having had his hair cut and beard trimmed, he looked much more like a civilised man.

He promised he would not go off on the spree in Vancouver and spend his few remaining dollars, and I kept as close a watch on him as I could. All went well and we were soon on our way to New York *en route* for England. In New York we booked our passages on the White Star liner, *Celtic*. We were staying at the old Hoffman Hotel and the night before sailing I was invited to dine with some friends, which compelled me to leave Brodie alone. However, he promised me he would remain in the hotel and read. But—did he?

At breakfast the next morning Brodie did not appear. I called his room but obtained no answer. I went up with one of the hotel porters and to my disgust found that he was not there nor had his bed been slept in! The steamer sailed at 11 a.m. and it was now nearly ten o'clock. I got my things together and left for the docks, telling the head porter to look out for my friend and hurry him off to the steamer.

Having got my baggage aboard, I walked up and down the wharf on the look out. The "all ashore" bugle sounded. No sign of the missing man. Lastly the gangway was hauled in and the ship began to move away. Still no sign and we left without him.

The explanation was that he had left the Hoffman, gone out with friends and eventually found himself on a Dutch steamer in the Atlantic on the way to Rotter-

dam, without any money ! But he reached home and has gone no more a-roving.

When I arrived in Dawson, the Bank of British North America consisted of a medium-sized tent and the furniture a rough wooden counter built across one end of it. The "strong room" was merely one or two large japanned tin boxes. After business hours each night, these boxes were solemnly paraded down Front Street under an escort of mounted police to the barracks. This was as much an event of the day as the Changing of the Guard at St. James's Palace.

The first manager of the Bank was David Doig, born at Thrums in Scotland, and his chief accountant was E. O. Finlaison, a native of Victoria, Vancouver Island. Both of these men became landmarks and there is no doubt that their names will be handed down in the archives of the palmy days of the Klondike. It was not long before business warranted the erection of a wooden Bank building ; it was evident that the Klondike rush was no flash in the pan, but had come to stay for a good many years.

David Doig soon became very popular with his clients. He was a shrewd, canny Scot where business was concerned, but he liked his native whiskey together with a good cigar. He was also a great admirer of the ladies. I did not get to know him well until 1899, but from then onwards I was treated almost as a member of

the staff, all of whom were extremely good to me. When the new Bank building was completed, it was decided that the staff should have their own mess in the Bank, the food being included in the salaries. This was on account of the high cost of living in Dawson. It was not long before a woman cook was obtained and it became the custom for several years after the Rush for each employee to make a list of any particular food he liked, and then a large order was compiled and sent out to Victoria or Vancouver for shipment to Dawson. This order often came to over £2000 for a year's supplies. It included all the most expensive canned foods imaginable—*pâté de foie gras*, canned oysters, caviare. Many an excellent meal and many a party I attended at the Bank, and there were occasions when one or more had to be assisted to his couch.

David Doig was frequently to be seen in '98 sitting about on the wooden side-walks with his feet in the street, wearing a soft slouch hat and a pair of flannel trousers and always smoking a small wooden pipe, with a white horn mouthpiece. Even in those days his great desire was to return to Victoria, B.C., and become manager of the head branch in that city, and he lived to realise his ambition.

Whenever I spent a night in Dawson or arrived early in the morning I invariably went to the Bank about 10 a.m. and, going into that building by the private entrance, I proceeded to the mess room, where I would

find David having his breakfast with a pint of champagne on the table, a glass of which was always my share. I must say that I should have disliked drinking champagne for my breakfast, but by 10 a.m. I had usually been up about four hours so that a sip of bubbly was pleasant ; moreover it was very expensive in those days and I was not prepared to pay the price.

Doig was particularly fond of good music, which of course was practically unobtainable in the Yukon. He had, however, procured, of all things, a small harmonium. This instrument had been found amongst the mixed cargo of canned goods, meats, etc., on a scow which had been caught in the ice near Fort Selkirk. As soon as sufficient snow had fallen to enable sledges to be used, this scow was unloaded of everything that had not perished from cold and brought to Dawson, including the famous harmonium. It was a source of much solace to Doig and another Scotch pal of his in Dawson, named Lindsay. We think of the lawless West as something foreign and almost inhuman in comparison with our home conventions—and it was. Yet the old simple domestic joys outcropped there as they always will, whatever the environment. With all the passions of the gold-hunters, their licences, their reckless disregard of the orderliness of life, here were two fellows who for hours upon hours enjoyed the most hackneyed of sentimentalities—"The Lost Chord" and such old airs.

At times something would go wrong with the harmonium and it would fall to pieces—the back and sides would collapse—to the intense amusement of any visitors.

When Doig and his party went into the Yukon in the spring of 1899 they found it would be necessary to cross Lake Lebarge, which was still frozen solid, on foot—a walk of thirty-two miles. Doig was too lazy to do this, so he hired an Indian and dog team to drive him across the Lake. The price being at the rate of 9 cents per pound, it cost him nearly \$20 with his baggage.

The staff of the Bank of B.N.A. in 1898-99 numbered about eight. A very good crowd of good lads, mostly English or Scottish, some of whom led a somewhat riotous life after the work was done. One in particular I recall had marvellous recuperative qualities. He was often carried to bed between 4 and 5 a.m., yet at 9.15 he would be at his desk, shaved and washed and looking as fresh as a daisy. Another had the distinction of being able to go fast asleep while standing on his feet with his back to a wall or saloon bar. A third, Stanley Hudson, left the Yukon with me in 1899 and proceeded to England, where he joined a regiment of Imperial Yeomanry and went to South Africa. He was killed on Christmas Day at Tweefontein. I received a letter from him written shortly before the tragedy, in which he said he had come into some money, that the war was

practically over and he hoped to be leaving South Africa in about three weeks' time. Poor Stanley, little did he know what was going to happen in a few days' time. They had spent a jovial Christmas Eve and were camped on a high kopje protected on one side by what appeared to be inaccessible rock walls. Consequently no sentries were posted on this side. But it was up this face that the Boers climbed, and rushed the camp, shooting down officers and men as they came hurriedly out of their tents—including Stanley. A bad local disaster.

Doig, in my recollection, is very much mixed up with ex-Senator Jerry Lynch, already mentioned as coming to Dawson with me on the *St. Paul*. Jerry was just as much a character as our musical bank manager. At the time of his arrival in Dawson he was about sixty years of age ; in height about 5 feet 9 inches, somewhat corpulent ; plenty of grey hair, grey moustache and grey pointed " Uncle Sam " beard. His favourite drink was claret and champagne, both very expensive.

There is no doubt that he was quite well off when he came to the Yukon. His fortune was founded, he told me, by buying stock in the famous Cemstock mine of California in its early days. Thus for the first five or six months on arrival he could afford to mark time. He examined many claims offered to him, but turned them down ; he loaned money at 10 per cent *per month* on excellent security. Towards winter he also purchased

a large stock of flour which he hoarded, as flour was scarce and he hoped to corner the market. He turned over a considerable amount of money, but held on too long in the spring and had to dispose of much of it at a small profit.

About February, '99, Jerry was offered a bench claim on Cheechako Hill ; it was known as the Millet claim. A considerable amount of work had been done on the property. Jerry with his miner brother spent several days prospecting the claim and finally decided to purchase ; it was discovered later that he was in partnership with Doig in the claim. Jerry built himself a small cabin just outside the mouth of the tunnel which he called his " Chalet " ; installed himself there and took command of his mining operations. Like ourselves in the latter part of 1899 he constructed a gravity tramway, sending pay gravel down in tip-up cars to the creek where they were dumped into hoppers or bins and sluiced from water out of the Bonanza Creek. As a matter of fact we allowed him to use our sluice and water when not in use by ourselves.

Our claims then consisted of the MacDonald, Clark, Britt, Atkinson and Clemensen. Jerry owned the Millet. I was anxious to purchase the Agner for some time. This belonged to a man named Hardman, a Government official. He offered to sell at \$4000, but Wood had an idea that it was too far back and off the pay streak, whereas I felt certain that from the rich prospects we

were getting in our Clemensen claim this rich pay would in every probability carry on into the Agner claim. The next time I approached Hardman his price had risen to \$6000. I was not certain that the rich streak carried through the Agner, and about this time Jerry was putting out feelers for this claim. No doubt his main tunnel was approaching it and showing increasingly good prospects. Hardman was not particularly anxious to sell to Lynch for some reason, but wanted me to buy. However, because of Wood's confidence that the Agner was off the pay streak, we turned down the offer and Lynch took it—for \$7000.

The Agner proved exceedingly rich—just as valuable, if not more so, than our best claim.

Where my tunnel reached the Agner boundary-line through Clemensen we found that Lynch had trespassed over our line to the extent of 304 square feet in immensely rich pay, which, no doubt, went through the Agner. Jerry maintained that he was not over my line, but I had an official survey made, which proved his trespass. I threatened to sue him for the illegal mining of my property unless he returned me so much per square foot, but Doig requested me to let the matter drop as it would be very difficult for me to prove the value of the excavated ground and the legal expenses involved would outweigh any award. Also the areas in dispute had been caved in, which prevented a check survey being made. But I was not going to be done

like that. I ordered my foreman to drive a cross-cut along Jerry's boundary as quickly as possible and to put on three shifts of miners and we encroached a good 300 square feet over Jerry's line in rich ground !

But what a pity we lost the Agner claim. Doig and Lynch cleaned up a nice little fortune out of it.

Whilst Jerry was in residence on the mine Doig used to come up frequently for a week-end visit, always bringing two or three bottles of very strong whiskey, most of which he drank himself. One week-end he had supper and spent the evening in my cabin, during which time he consumed one and a half bottles of whiskey. About midnight he rose.

"I must return to the Chalet now," he said ; put on his fur coat and started along the trail to the Lynch property which was less than half a mile away. It was mid-winter and everything was covered in snow, with the temperature about 40° below zero. David was smoking a cigar. I watched him for a little while in the moonlight ; he was a bit unsteady, but appeared to be able to remain on the trail.

About half an hour after he had left I was possessed by some unaccountable premonition that all might not be well with him, so I put on my fur cap, coat, etc., and walked along the snow trail to Lynch's Chalet. As the cabin came in sight there was no light in the window or smoke coming out of the stack, which I thought unusual. Approaching hurriedly I suddenly spotted

friend Doig sound asleep in a snow drift with no gloves on his hands. I had a hard job to wake him up and make him go into the cabin. He said he was perfectly comfortable in the snow drift—it was too hot to go indoors ! His fingers were just commencing to freeze and unless I had found him that night he would have been a dead man before morning.

Strangely enough, one of his bank clerks had a very similar experience—he got drunk in one of the saloons and started back for the cabin where several of them lived together, and finally collapsed in the snow within a few yards of home. Fortunately he too was discovered before he had been there too long. He was wearing a thin pair of leather gloves and both his hands were badly frozen. In removing the gloves, indeed, masses of skin came off with them.

Freezing, of course, is a painless death, particularly if one goes out into intense cold in a more or less drunken condition. The effect of the cold is to produce an uncontrollable desire for sleep ; in fact, it is agony to keep awake and men have had to be kicked and knocked about to get them on their feet. Once fall asleep in the snow in Arctic weather and that is the end—quite painless and unconscious.

The principal centre round which Dawson life swung was the Zero Club—probably the furthest north social club on earth. In and out of its doors all “ notabilities ”

passed. These doors are permanently shut long since and the majority of members have crossed the Great Divide, but they live in my memory with affectionate vividness and I am certain figure large in the recollections of any old-timer who was in Dawson between 1898 and 1912.

Every life a story. They were not all prospectors, though practically every one had been, for no man went to the Klondike in those days unless he secreted a hope to dig up a fortune. Lots, however, soon lost heart and then, if they had previously practised trade or profession, they promptly turned again to their old ways. That is how we obtained our doctors, lawyers, barristers and such.

Their lives all had drama in them. Some I can mention here, others only indicate chiefly because they still live, have covered the bad old days in respectable prosperity and official dignity.

One legal firm comes to mind. The head of it afterwards acquired civic fame, but then—well, he was very popular at the club and the dance halls. "Happy," as everyone called him, could certainly "hit the high spots" when it came to a drinking party; in fact, I am afraid nearly all his share of the firm's fees was dissipated in giving expression to his good fellowship and *joie de vivre*. Now Happy had a great dread of the sea and was notoriously a bad sailor. On one occasion I sailed in the same small coastal steamer with him from Skagway to

Vancouver. On this trip there is only one expanse of water open to gales from the Pacific—Queen Charlotte Sound, which at times can be exceedingly rough and unpleasant. When approaching this stage of the journey Happy became so terrified of sea-sickness that he made up his mind deliberately to get drunk before the ship entered the Sound. This he successfully accomplished, and when he woke up with a very bad head and mouth and was told that Queen Charlotte Sound had never before been so smooth and calm and that the steamer kept an even keel all the way across—he felt like getting drunk again, he said.

He was very hard up when he left the Yukon and was on his way back to his native town to start business afresh. Some fourteen years later I ran across him there. He had prospered exceedingly and was one of the most important citizens. He had cultivated the most venerable appearance and was immaculately dressed. All traces of the wild life of the Yukon had disappeared and it seemed that any references to his escapades in the north were not too favourably received.

He had a partner in the Klondike—with a very different story. An Englishman, he was quiet, but, like most men out there, he had a passion. It was for a Dawson demi-mondaine who rejoiced in the name of "Diamond-Toothed Gertie," as she always wore a small diamond set between her two front teeth in the upper jaw. He married her. The wooden building in

which the business of the firm was conducted caught fire and the Englishman was trapped in a room and burnt to death.

Some made good in after years ; some didn't. George Black, in the early days, was not a lawyer of prominence even in Dawson, yet, as I write, he is Speaker of the Dominion House of Parliament. On the other hand, there was my own legal man. For years he acted for me out there and yet I never knew his "romance." He was English, tall and heavily made. He came from Calgary and once or twice I heard vague rumours that he was not fully qualified to practise. I put that down to his beard and spectacles which suggested a disguise. Also he had miserable offices—a couple of shabby rooms. He did his business in one and lived in the other. All the bedding I ever saw on his couch was a tanned cow-hide, black and white in colour, a most uncomfortable robe at any time. Whatever may be said for or against him he most certainly knew how to pile on his fees. I shall never forget how I invited him up from Dawson to my claim on Cheechako Hill one week-end to discuss a case I had against some wood-choppers for non-delivery of contract. We gave him a splendid welcome to the mine—he drank more whiskey than he had done for many a day and I believe he was about two days recovering from a bad attack of liver ! He had a comfortable room in my cabin with lots of food. And then he charged me \$100 for the visit !

I found out that my lawyer had been married and divorced and that he had a lucrative practice somewhere in England and had migrated to Canada. Finally, one day a friend said to me concerning him : had I heard the news ?

“ No, what is it ? ” I asked.

“ The Bar here has discovered that he had lived here under a false name and that he was struck off the roll in England. He has left Dawson ! ”

True enough, he'd gone. One can fill in the gaps. Some blunder at home, a new start penetrating even to the Arctic. There is no doubt that he was making good, but a shadowy hand stretched out from the past and grabbed him. No one seems to have heard what happened to him ; he simply left Dawson and disappeared.

Men blew up into prominence and faded out again—like bits of wreckage surging to a wave crest and disappearing. Among the medical fraternity probably one of our best doctors in Dawson was J——. I was told that he had a very good practice “ outside ” before the Klondike stampede began and that there was no necessity for him to come to Dawson except perhaps his thirst for adventure and gold. He was married and had two or three children. During the terrible outbreak of typhoid in 1898 he was wonderfully successful with his patients, hardly losing a case. Yet the conditions for nursing were dreadful. There was no room at all ; the

one small hospital was overflowing, the sanitary arrangements were most inadequate and he had nothing like a sufficient number of nurses and staff. J—— worked night and day with his patients and in many cases was unable to collect a fee of any sort for his pains, even though he effected a cure. He played a hero's part—yet he was man, swayed by that irresistible atmosphere.

At the height of his career tragedy stepped in. He became hopelessly enamoured of a dance-hall girl well known on the local variety stage. She was outstandingly good-looking compared with the majority of girls of similar type. The doctor had rooms in the same building as the girl and one morning she was found dead in her bed with a bullet through her brain and the doctor's revolver by her side. There was an inquest. He was exonerated from any blame in connection with the tragedy. The wretched girl had taken his revolver and shot herself with it—she was a drug addict.

As was only natural in a community where the enormous luck of the few was ever providing contrast to the heartbreak of the many, comedy and tragedy were constantly stepping on each other's heels.

Here are two paragraphs which appeared in a London newspaper on the same day, May 25th, 1900 :

News comes from Dawson City that Captain Thorburn, late of the 42nd Highlanders, being unable to dispose of his Klondike properties in

England owing to the war (South African) became so depressed that he committed suicide.

A non-commissioned officer in the Yukon Field Force who went by the name of Watson, though he came of a good English family—the Beresfords—shot himself at Dawson City. He was most popular in his regiment.

I know nothing of the latter case, save that it is typical of many, but I did know Thorburn well. Moreover, I was personally concerned with his sad story.

Thorburn wasn't in the least good-looking, but he had what might be called a typical "soldier" face; he was tall, wiry and well built and a good fellow.

When I first met him in Dawson he was at a loose end. During one of our talks he told me he was engaged to be married to a girl in England. They were devoted to each other, but he had no income and no job. Then he had been offered the position of general manager of a mining company in the Klondike and had jumped at the opportunity, perhaps to make his fortune.

His first disappointment came when he discovered his company had purchased worthless mining claims. His job went phut.

Early in the spring of 1900, during a spell of intensely cold weather—about fifty degrees below zero—two men arrived at my cabin on Cheechako Hill with an urgent

request for me to travel down to 60 Below Discovery to examine and write a report on a certain bench claim which they would recommend a friend of mine to purchase. It so happened that the two men mentioned above I knew in 1894 in New Mexico, and they had been "grubstaked" by an English friend of mine named Ellice, who owned a ranch in the Peccs Valley in New Mexico and it was for him they wished a report.

I was not in the least inclined to make the trip and told them so, but they appeared to think I would be conferring a great favour on my old friend Ellice by doing so, and in the end I went. I was taken to a small log cabin on a first tier bench claim. We entered and, to my astonishment, the first man I saw was Thorburn.

"What are you up to here?" I exclaimed.

"I have an option on this claim and have just been washing out a few pans," he explained.

Besides Thorburn the cabin contained another fairly well-known Bonanza operator, who seemed to be in deep conversation with the owners of the claim.

The whole atmosphere was peculiar—everyone was in groups whispering about paystreaks, values and so on.

Finally, I told my friends that if they wanted a report they must get busy, as I wasn't going to stay all day messing about. "Get a pick, shovel and gold pan," I ordered, "and follow me into the narrow tunnel." This had been driven sixty feet into the frozen gravel of the bench claim.

Having taken samples of gravel we returned to the cabin, where a panning tub had been rigged up with some warm water in which I proceeded to wash my pans. The result was not in the least encouraging—only a few colours. After looking over the boundaries of the claim I prepared to take my departure.

Before leaving I had a word with Thorburn. I told him the outlook was very bad, but he shrugged in a resigned manner. That, later, when the news of his death reached me, seemed pathetically fatalistic.

“Last chance,” he said. “I’ve a few thousand dollars left and I’m going to sink the lot in this claim. If it comes out trumps I’m off back home to be married. If not——”

I never saw him again.

He bought the claim. It was worthless, and so one night in May, alone in his cabin, despondency got him. The girl he loved could never be his, he was broke to the world and had evidently no one to whom he could turn for help. His death was a great shock to the small band of Englishmen in Dawson.

My opinion, formed shortly after the tragedy, was that the sale of the claim to Thorburn was a “put-up job” between the two men who came to me and the owners of the claim. There is little doubt in my mind that Thorburn was told if he abandoned the option I would immediately take it up.

CHAPTER XI

ISOLATED IN THE SUB-ARCTIC

I NOW turn to what was perhaps the greatest adventure of my life.

Every year I had returned from the Klondike to England and more than once I did that tremendous journey over the winter trail from Skagway to the mines. True, the diminutive railway had been constructed and in a way lightened the task, though in 1900 I recollect when covering forty miles in twenty hours, sitting on wooden seats, with nothing to eat and the thermometer forty below zero, I had my doubts whether it would not have been better to be out with the dogs on the snow. It was so beastly cold that my favourite dog died on that trip and, alas, when at length we pushed on by sleigh, I sprained an ankle, making the going pretty rotten ; got badly frost-bitten in consequence, for when it happened I had still nearly two hundred and fifty miles to travel.

However, those were the natural incidences of life in the bleak north. As long as our work was productive, one was ready to accept the trials. It was that year I was made manager. But there is no need to recapitulate further day-by-day experience of my gold mining. We

carried on for a year or two, meeting our hardships cheerfully, enjoying the strange life of Dawson, Grand Forks and other camps, making friendships and, one hoped, few enemies.

It was in 1905 that we set out on a different type of trip and on my desk as I write is a cutting from the *Dawson News* of 1906, which brings it all back vividly to mind.

We had left the Yukon and had penetrated to the little-known waters of the McMillan River—and I and a partner had taken our wives with us. Women living calmly and securely in British towns will find it hard to grasp the sort of dangers and hardships that these two women of ours met and overcame. Perhaps if one doubt above all others was constant in my mind through the long months we were cut off entirely from our fellow beings, it was the thought that we were pathetically helpless should accident or illness visit us. There was no doctor round the corner to call in! In fact we were 255 miles from our nearest neighbour—at Selkirk, and that post was over a hundred miles away from Dawson, where alone was anything approaching civilisation.

Speaking of the women, the *Dawson News* remarked : “ Both delicately nurtured, accustomed to the refinements and culture to be found in the largest centres of population, theirs has been an exhibition of devotion and self-sacrifice uncommon even in this region of brimming paradoxes.

“ If the husbands deserve the highest credit for their

efforts to open up and develop a new and remote country, their wives are entitled to the most fulsome panegyrics for having shared their lot in a wilderness so completely beyond the pale of civilisation."

For sixteen months we were buried in that wilderness, and I can assure my women readers it was pretty tough going for our wives when the thermometer was fifty below zero, when we ran out of wood and . . . but let me give an entry taken haphazard from my diary during that winter :

Saturday, January 20th. Colder than ever to-day 56 below. No sign of abatement. Cold, clear-looking sky, without a vestige of a cloud ; heavy haze overhanging the creek. The sun shines now from 11 until 2.30, but there is not sufficient warmth in its rays to make more than 2° difference in the temperature. The intense cold seems to burn one's lungs on going out first thing in the morning. Only absolute necessity compelled Pom and self to go up the hill and haul down seven fair-sized trees for firewood as we have only half a day's wood on hand. We accomplished the work without freezing ourselves anywhere, although we both had falls and were at length obliged to fly into the cabin.

But, permit me to take you in imagination with us to that lost river and invite you to share the unusual

experience, living in Arctic conditions while we thawed our way down to bedrock by means of wood fires and heated rocks seeking that mother lode which the sons of man so worship.

That winter certainly produced one of the coldest spells ever known in the country and it was like coming into a new world when after nearly a year and a half of such isolation we floated our home-made scow down river to Dawson. That took ten days, sleeping by night on the bank in tents. Grand hours seated round the camp-fires, with all the worry and fears safely behind us and Dawson—San Francisco—New York—home !—to look forward to.

This was how it all came about. Another romance of the haphazard. But then, out there in those days everything was chance. You scraped the ground—metaphorically speaking—and pocketed a fortune, or you turned up just dirt, producing nothing at all of value—unless it was an object lesson in philosophy !

During the rush in '97-'98 a young Nova Scotian named Duncan Gillis, while on his way into the Klondike via the Lizard River, had descended the Upper McMillan in mistake for the North Fork of the Stewart River and on his way down-stream had stopped at the mouth of what he afterwards named Slate Creek. He spent several weeks as he ascended the creek, panning on the gravel bars for gold, with most encouraging results. As he had no provisions to spare and no outfit with which

to face an Arctic winter, in the fall he proceeded slowly to float down-stream on a raft made of dry logs.

The following summer he returned with two partners and carried out more extensive prospecting, using a roughly made "Rocker," or "Long Tom" with which more satisfactory samples of gold dust were obtained. They again left the district before the freeze-up and that winter Gillis was able to proceed to Ottawa and obtain the grant of a prospecting concession on Slate Creek, or as it was now renamed, Russel Creek. This concession comprised five square miles, subject to certain conditions.

In July, 1900, Duncan Gillis visited me on Bonanza Creek and explained what he had discovered on the Upper McMillan River. If I would examine his find and put up the necessary money (if satisfied) to carry out extensive prospecting, he offered to transfer to me a one-half interest in his concession. Very little attention would have been given to Gillis's story, but for the fact that he had been prospecting in the Yukon since 1892—long before the big Bonanza strike—and that he had worked some fairly good claims at Circle City in Alaska. He knew what he was talking about and, on top of his record, he struck me personally as a most dependable man. His story rang true. That was why I decided to investigate Russel Creek.

I had been married three years then and, having experienced long separations, my wife begged to accompany me. You can imagine with what mixed feelings

I talked it over with her—in words all the time pointing out the immense difficulties ; in my own mind finding the prospect, indeed, pleasing. I knew I should be away for something like a year and a half, but I realised far more surely than she did, since I knew the country and the sort of dare fate out there can throw at a fellow, just what risks I should be permitting her to take. Her enthusiasms won, and I must say I set off with the sense more of holiday than work, to think of being together all the long winter instead of labouring through it alone, or at least, with only one other male as company.

That other male was Mr. G. H. Leith, a brother of the late Sir Wellesley Leith-Buchanan of Loch Lomond, and lo ! I found he, too, wanted to bring his bride along. For them it was to be something in the nature of an unusual honeymoon, since they had but recently been married. Well, we four went, and I hesitate even now to recall the sensation of insecurity that flooded over me when at length our few assistants had gone off down river and left us four to the terrible freeze-up. Suppose . . . but, as with an unspoken understanding, never once did one of us make outward reference to the eventualities that might overwhelm us.

Remember we were going into almost unknown country—a part so remote that we were the first human beings that had attempted to navigate the waters as far as our destination. A few stray prospectors, of course, had found their way wearily by foot or poling up the

river in canoes, but this was the first time even the tiniest of steamers had penetrated those fastnesses, and certainly it was the initial effort in any serious way to open up the country.

I discussed the question of navigation by small flat-bottomed river steamer with Gillis and his opinion was that it might be feasible, provided we met with a good stage of water. There were, he said, some bad rapids in what was known as the Pelly Canyon and, generally speaking, the McMillan was sluggish, narrow and very shallow in many places. We determined to risk it—anything, especially with the women, in preference to open boats propelled by long poles, though in after years more than once we had to resort to that extremely hard and tough method.

Arrangements were made with the owners of a small but well-built and powerful little river steamboat named *The Prospector*, to attempt to reach the mouth of Russel Creek with my small party, the price to be \$1700. It was expected that it would take the steamer about nine days—if all went well. After a most successful trip with an experienced river pilot, *The Prospector* arrived at the mouth of Russel Creek, 450 miles from Dawson City, and the fact that we were the first steamer to navigate those waters was duly chronicled by nailing a board to a tree on the river-bank at the mouth of the creek, containing the names of all present. In my party was included a young Dominion Land Surveyor named



Difficulties encountered while navigating the McMillan River's shallow water—sand-bars—rocks—rapids—snags—accidents to machinery, etc.
Hauling on capstan by hand.



Full steam ahead ! A dangerous moment in a channel very narrow and swift. Author and John Barr on shore ready to let go wire cable in case of accident.



In trouble again—shoal water. All hands out with the poles. Author in white shirt.



Our bridge across Canyon Creek, a tributary of Russell Creek.

C. S. W. Barwell (an old Westminster boy). He was to make a survey of the concession and to take astronomical bearings to determine the geographical position of Russel Creek.

We were as far off the map as that.

The 255-mile trip up-river produced its thrills. I had been over some portion of the country, but to the women it must have been an eerie experience to look first upon this far-thrown wilderness. There were little squeals of interest when any human being was sighted—prospectors' or trappers' huts here and there along the bank and once we overtook Prissick, a fur trader I knew, with his canoe and three dogs, to whom we gave a "lift" as far as Moose Creek, where we landed him for his winter's trapping.

Once, too, we caught sight of a man on the bank who, curiously enough, covered his face with his hands as if he did not want to be recognised. I wondered whether it was Brodie, because we knew he had gone somewhere along the Pelly River and had spent last winter all alone, trapping.

Very tiresome intervals came round with painful regularity when we had to get ashore and cut—and cut—and cut—wood for the steamer fires! We couldn't keep them going at the required pressure. Sometimes the ship did no more than two miles an hour, which was pretty serious when we reached such stretches as the rapids in Pelly Canyon. It took us over five hours to get

through the bad water there, but, thanks be, we came out of it without accident. There were occasions later on when we touched bottom, but always it happened to be sand and we managed to get her off without damage.

It didn't matter whether it was midday or midnight, those boilers had to be fed and more than once we were at it sawing until four in the morning ! But at length, on July 15th, we reached our destination and our freight was unloaded. We pitched tents, and had our first taste of what was to be a really painful trial during many weeks to come—mosquitoes ! Millions of 'em, not to mention black ants !

The women didn't realise just what was in store for them in this direction that morning when we all gathered beside the little steamer and saw it draw away into mid-stream.

We waved our hands ; the captain gave three cheery blasts on the siren and slowly she slipped away downstream. I know I felt rather like a man who had been marooned on some desert island, watching his ship go off without him. I looked at Marian and prayed that no disaster should befall us through those bitter winter days and nights I knew so well and which would perforce be a real strain on her endurance. Her loyalty and courage I knew would never forsake her.

So we turned to the first heart-breaking job of the campaign, to get our truck—tons and tons of it—across from its first dump on the river side to our permanent quarters.

CHAPTER XII

TRIALS OF THE TRAIL

IT was thirteen miles from the McMillan to Russel Creek, but we planned to make a relay camp at a place called Canyon Creek, some three and a half miles on the way. Four men remained with us after the vessel left and I had brought a boat on the steamer so that they could row back to Dawson in the autumn before the freeze-up. This they did, leaving us on October 13th—which surely was a bad date for them, as I shall recount later, for their experiences on the return journey were terrible. One of the four stayed on with us—C. Pomeroy—and what we should have done without him I don't know. His strength and endurance were equalled only by his willingness and extreme loyalty.

In addition to these men we had an old horse, Barney, and a team of dogs.

Perhaps we ought to have called that horse Blarney ; he was full of quaint tricks and had a habit of being somewhere else just when he was wanted. I cannot recall the number of occasions when we had to postpone a trip down the trail—often for much-needed supplies—because our four-footed friend had chosen to wander off in search of fodder, or in obedience to some jocular

impulse to examine the neighbourhood. Maybe he had imbibed something of the prospector's wanderlust ; anyhow, he was a great wanderer and sometimes would absent himself for days on end, often being found lying fast asleep in a patch of bush, totally ignoring the urgency of the thousands of jobs that were requiring his strenuous attention.

Then he would come home with a cold and play the invalid, while the trail piled up with snow and time was the essence of safety for us !

Yet he was invaluable. And he stuck it throughout that painful winter. He had his trials, facing difficulties and dangers shared by few of his brethren. I turn the voluminous pages of my diary and find him so often up to the neck in it that it is impossible to recount but the smallest portion of his adventures. I see that on November 7th, for instance, we had gone down to the McMillan for supplies and were returning to Russel Creek with a sleigh-load amounting to about 300 lbs.

Terrible journey back to camp. Barney fell down going up Cache Hill and slid backwards with the load for about twenty yards. There were stumps every few yards sticking out of the snow and the sleigh turned turtle five times. It took us three hours to do the three and a half miles to Canyon Creek. Ice gave way crossing to the river and we had the devil's own game getting Barney out, to

say nothing of the sleigh. Never thought we should make camp that night, but arrived safely at 6.30—in a snowstorm !

Also the poor beast had to put up with bad shoes. We took eleven tons of supplies with us and it would surprise the uninitiated to read a list of the articles we had to remember. Not only did we require every conceivable thing that would be essential to existence, but we had heaps of engineering gear to pack—pipes, wire, hose, riveting machine, nozzle and so on.

If you have got a hundred miles into the wilderness it is too late to remedy the fact that, say, you have brought no soap—or ammunition—or a forge. There is no stepping round the corner to the nearest shop ! Yet we arrived on Russel Creek and discovered we had no nails for Barney's shoes ! That was a bad blunder for so old a campaigner as I was. But I rather excused myself—seeing I was not exactly in the habit of travelling with a lady through the northlands—when Marian pointed out that I had also omitted to include a flat iron in our stores ! We improvised the necessary ironing implement out of a hammer-head, but we could not make nails. Barney was saved by an entirely unforeseen piece of good fortune.

Quite unknown to us, a couple of trappers had a camp a mere twenty-five miles away. I knew one of them, John Barr, then and came to know him even better later. A typical man of the wilds if ever there was one. He

would spend the long winters alone or with a partner in some lone cabin far from any other humans, unless he chanced on an Indian encampment. Facetiously, yet I think with an inner pride, he called himself the King of the McMillan, and surely enough he regarded himself as something of a law out there. He had a habit of leaving notes on cabin doors and such places telling anyone who happened along—might be next day or a year hence—what he was doing and where he was. His language was simple and his spelling complicated. I have preserved one or two of those quaint notes and give them here just as I got them. After all, nothing can more graphically create a picture of "the things as they were" than to look at these actual pieces of paper and realise where they came from. Pinned on a door up above the Arctic Circle. Can't you see the tall man with his rugged face, ploughing along in his snow-shoes, his parkey up to his nose, icicles hanging from his moustache, a pack on his back, his hands mittened, coming out of the gloom of the timber into a clearing on the ice-bound river-side and slouching up to a hut that hadn't been occupied for months? He knew where the key was and went in, made a fire—and wrote a note. Some Indian, hunting after moose or trapping for beaver, would happen that way some time or another, would read, if he could, the note and do what was required of him. Or perhaps it was some straying white man like Brodie who would surely find in the few written

and almost illegible words—carefully screened from the weather—a link with the Big World of the Outside.

One time, I remember—it was a year after the trip I am dealing with really—I had left a note nailed on the door of my base camp at McMillan ; door of the same cabin we were to build on this adventure with my wife and the Leiths.

Will the first man who leaves here for Selkirk please mail this letter and oblige. Nevill A. D. Armstrong.

I greatly wanted a certain letter to get out and this was the only hope. It was attached to the above notice. John Barr had happened upon it, but he was not going to Selkirk. He did, however, append his own appeal, as you can see from the actual piece of paper reproduced on page 216.

The George referred to in this note was George Crosby who was his partner that same year we were at Russel Creek. And so we return to 1905 and Barney, for one day, much to our surprise, in walked Crosby to our camp. That was, of course, before the freeze-up, and happily before the old horse had suffered much from lack of proper attention to his feet. George came back a bit later, bringing with him a bag of the required nails. So all was well. We were able to re-shod Barney, for out yonder one has to be a farrier as well as an engineer, a geologist, a carpenter, a navvy, a trapper, a cook and domestic servant and what not.

Sept 12th 07

Bill the first man who leaves here
for Selkirk please mail this letter
and greatly O.K.
Will A.D. Armstrong.

I the father of
the Macmillan
Command you who love
you Be Red white and
soon going to Selkirk
to take this letter
I Barr

Here is another literary effort of his I found in 1905.

1905
August the 9
To Armstrong
or Parker you
will find small
Sacks on wire
By the side of the
Board Table at
With you are
Leaving in the ^{min} next
will Be Back in
four or 5 days
J Bark

Just one more :

Aug 17
 To Mr Arenas Strong.
 Dear Boy we leave
 Dear this morning
 for Huskey Bog on
 North Fork of Halve
 maid the trip up
 South Fork George
 Hass Maid Taut
 trips with all the
 bags up slait we
 Halve Abandoned
 the Aron River for
 the presant mope
 iss scairs just Now
 we leave you Keay
 off cabin we it
 George will Be Hear

About Oct the 1
there iss 3 Men gon
up South fork I
gave them the key
off that cabin
they Ar After
Heds of Mr Tod iss
the main part He Has
wone off the Bays with
him Sherlew
Had last year of life
the cold sent He
iss Ann Africann.
Hunter All well
J Barr

But to return to our landing. Perhaps during the early days what comes most poignantly back to one's memory is not so much the labour of pitching camp, not the roughing it, not the back-breaking job of packing tons of supplies across to Canyon Creek. No, it is the mosquitoes. For it isn't always winter in the north and believe me, when the country is green and lush and one is glad to walk in shirt-sleeves, there is no land on earth which has so many mosquitoes to the square inch as the Yukon. And the most densely populated inches are those in the immediate vicinity of one's face! You cannot breathe for them, cannot see for them and, aided and abetted by black gnats, they make so vigorous and continuous an attack on you that thought of the winter, which ends their playfulness, is comforting. They get into your clothes, into your tent, into your food, I find in my daily notes written at the time there is hardly an entry which does not refer to the pests—in no polite way either.

It was blazing hot and often we were caught in heavy thunder showers, but day by day we toiled, first of all making a cache at the river to store our supplies and then packing the most necessary things over to Canyon Creek. Here we had to build a bridge in order to proceed to the next relay camp. It was not a very excellent piece of work, consisting of a rather unstable tree, but later we adorned it with a rail for the sake of the ladies. They pulled their weight all along, taking the

dogs packed with their own necessities over the trail in tireless fashion. And it was not easy, for the route went up steep hills and fell down sharp declivities, and at points one sank into bog. We spent a lot of time with our axes broadening the way after we had blazed it, and in constructing log and brush beds where the road was specially insecure. Hot work—it was so trying that old Barney one day bled profusely from the nose and sometimes the dogs wouldn't show willing. We had to, though ; we carried an average of one thousand pounds of material daily over that three-and-a-half-mile "road." I remember my final load before we moved camp from the river to canyon consisted among other things of a wire mattress. Nearly killed me and only the thought of Marian's comfort kept me going. Heavy rain had made the trail very soft in places and once Barney upset all his packages and Leith fell head over heels into the brush with a heavy load.

On August 1st we moved on from Canyon to Russel Creek, our real destination.

Marian and Mrs. Leith up early. After striking tent and packing bedding we loaded the three dogs with canned meat, boots, hammers and odds and ends. The horse was laden with the cooking outfit and at 9.30 we all moved off for the promised land. Very hot. The poor girls were dreadfully done up and arrived at 3.30 p.m. After supper Leith, Pomeroy and I went back to the cache again for another load, returning at 12.20 p.m. Tired out.

Then back and forth, ten miles there and ten back, day after day, and my part not helped by the fact that just before coming from England, I had broken my leg playing Rugger. Sometimes the tendons of that leg ached like a gnawing tooth, and in the middle of it all Leith got lumbago.

There was heaps to do for ourselves ; we were still in tents and must build weather-resisting cabins before the cold set in ; our fodder and gear were distributed miles apart ; we had to shoot our food ; we would soon need wood for fires. Yet we were all keenest on the main object for which we had set out—was there worth-while gold in Russel Creek ? Within a day or two, between the thousand other jobs, Leith and I and the men were finding time to start in on the workings which Duncan Gillis had left. On the 11th Leith and I were putting in two sluice-boxes and mending the ditch. That ditch was always breaking, causing endless delay. Also the boxes were set above bedrock and it was difficult to retain firm sides. Gravel broke away several times and inundated us, stopping operations. One day the lead flume came apart and caused heavy caves of gravel. Next morning we set a string of boxes on bedrock and took out a fair-sized cut, but later in the afternoon a lot of gravel again caved in on us. We also had to move a quantity of large boulders, granite and limestone. We riveted the pipe, we mended the ditch, we cut twelve-inch boards to make a sixteen inch by twenty-four

inch sluice line, we shovelled tailings which were blocking the creek bed, blasted the boulders—it may not sound very thrilling to the uninitiated, even dull stuff, but it meant work and more work from early morning to late at night.

But as early as August 17th a few colours were visible on bedrock, and that encouragement was reward enough for all our strenuous endeavour.

“How I would like to strike a good patch of gold-bearing gravel!” I find myself writing, tired out and in my tent that night.

Meanwhile, we had to think about our larder. The ladies were out every decent day picking red currants, cranberries and other fruit that abounded in the locality and made excellent puddings and jam, while Leith and I, and sometimes Pomeroy—or Pom as he became familiarly known to all of us—went after game.

Our first moose was killed on August 21st. Leith and I started out at 8.30, carrying rifles, cartridges, field-glasses, pack straps and food. We went up the creek over a mile and then struck out across undulating spruce and willow country. About a mile from the mouth of George Creek, Leith spotted a bull moose running through some elder brush in the bottom of a ravine. The quarry soon came into view about two hundred yards distant on a bare hill-side. Leith fired and missed. Taking steady aim, I dropped the moose. Leith fired again almost at the same second as myself and struck it

also. We ran hard towards the spot and found that he had risen to his feet again and dropped dead sixty yards further on. Marian and Mrs. Leith went up in the afternoon and viewed the carcass which we packed back to camp on the horse. Next day Jackson, one of the men, skinned all the meat and we were served with a beautiful hot roast for supper. It was simply delicious, as tender as any meat I have ever eaten. The dogs gorged themselves on the hide—rather tough chewing.

The first nip of frost came as early as August 26th. Did it presage a long winter? A good deal depended on that. Of course, I hoped the fall would be mild for Marian's sake, but also we wanted to retain the men as late as possible. There was so much to do both in the workings and in the camp. We were still in tents and cabins must now be built. This was borne in upon us thus early, for that day, when only four degrees of frost were registered, conditions were already unpleasant. Here is the record of that day :

Poured nearly all night and turned to snow in the morning, accompanied by strong and cold north-west wind. Leith and I finished fixing bedding piece for nozzle and then fitted basement of nozzle. George and Pomeroy finished riveting pipe and after dinner we commenced to lay pipe. Much difficulty in fitting pipe together. Most of the ends seemed too large to telescope one into the other, which caused endless delay. Jim finished



A fat "spike" bull moose, killed for the larder.



The first moose killed by Author and partner for the winter's meat supply. Our wives in at the death with their two puppies "Jumbo" and "Sim," later to become magnificent sleigh dogs.



Frozen in for the winter in Russell Creek. Returning from a tour of a trap line. George Leith holding up a large lynx. Mrs. Armstrong and Mrs. Leith standing by the dogs.



Some of the pelts we trapped during the winter; also some big-game trophies. Author on left, Pomeroy on right.

the six sluice-boxes and then 50 more block riffles. Felt beastly all day. Cold work handling iron pipes and crowbars on such a day as this. All our noses decidedly red. Mountains look beautiful in their mantle of snow, but it is a ghastly reminder of the weather to come. Marian went for a short walk in the afternoon as a constitutional, and after supper she took me to view a patch of grass which she discovered while picking berries. We want a good deal more hay for old Barney to last over the winter.

And the next (Sunday) :

Fine day but cold in the shade and only thawed in the sun. Ice on the buckets this morning. All hands spent the day in finishing the ditch and completing pipe-line, another joint gave us a good deal of trouble and we were forced to heat it, which accomplished the desired effect. Connected pipe-line with 58 feet of 14-inch hose and at 5.30 all finished and ready for water. The latter being turned into the ditch at 5.40 and at 6.15 a small head was flowing through the monitor. Waiting until to-morrow morning to turn on full pressure. Mr. and Mrs. Leith went out and picked more red currants. After supper I went down to the cache to get the 4-inch reducer for the nozzle. Fell off a log and nearly broke my leg again. Cold again to-night.

While on Monday, August 28th, the thermometer was down to 20° :

Froze fairly hard in the night and it was 9.30 before we could turn water into the ditch. The pipe-line leaked a good deal at the start, but by pouring a plentiful supply of sawdust into the pen-stock the leaks took up considerably. We caulked most of the worst leaks with oakum. Jim and I looked after the ditch line as there were several weak places which necessitated the carrying of bags of sand on our backs, as the ditch was built in gravel. Pomeroy, Leith and George attended all day to the sluicing, and by 6 o'clock we had moved a large volume of gravel. Owing to a leak in the ditch, Leith's tent was flooded with water and most of his things got very wet. Helped Leith fix a ditch round his tent.

Glimpses of our daily round and its difficulties.

But the cold snap departed and I may say that, though we were to have a great deal of snow and a few spells of frost, it turned out to be one of the mildest falls on record. As you shall hear, however, we had to pay for that mercy. There came a time when we were in the grip of the bitterest weather I ever experienced ; when for a fortnight Marian was unable to leave the shelter of the cabin and when there was real danger of frost-bite if one ventured a few yards out of doors.

Meantime, in our " spare " time we were commencing to build our home. No light task, especially when snow fell or the rain pelted down, drenching a fellow in a few seconds. We had to go into the mountains and cut logs, booming them down across the Creek which was covered with large slippery boulders. About this time Barney was missing for days ; we tracked him several miles and decided he must have gone all the way down to the river. Sure enough, when we planned an expedition there, we came on him quietly grazing as though a spot of grass was worth all the gold in the Klondike.

End of September. The frost had returned and it now became a race against the winter and the erecting of our cabins. But we couldn't give all our time to their construction ; we had to hunt, we had to fish ; we had to keep sluicing—and, incidentally, repairing breaks in that ditch and shovelling away gravel that kept on caving in on us.

Worked hard at the cabin all afternoon and by 6 o'clock had the roof on. It takes a long time fixing the gables properly and getting the ridge poles plumb, not to mention putting on the moss and dirt.

That was on September 26th. Two days later Marian was out alone when she saw a bear in the distance, and came home flying.

CHAPTER XIII

ADVENTURES WITH GRIZZLIES

THAT was not the first sign of grizzlies we had. The men had heard them several days before and one or another of us had come on their tracks. It made me nervous, for not only were we often out with little but a pea-shooter, but the girls were in the habit of wandering off for their constitutionals and occasionally farther afield. For instance, we had made a fish trap and Marian would be interested to go out and see if we had had any luck, returning now and then with a few greyling.

A little later I myself happened on grizzly tracks when I was alone and to all intents and purposes unarmed, on my way back from canyon to the camp. I made pretty quick tracks for timber, knowing that as a last resort I could at least shin up a tree and so find temporary safety.

Many were the stories of encounters with these gentry in the desolate lands. I had one, not this year, but later, though it was on the very trail from the McMillan to Russel Creek.

I was alone and walking along with a heavy pack on my back, and under my arm—thank goodness—a new 30.40 Winchester repeating rifle (under lever action).

It was September, blueberries were ripe and that year very plentiful. While travelling along the trail previously I had noticed a considerable amount of fresh droppings, showing plainly that bear were coming down after the berries. On this particular day I was on a part of the route which wound in and out among a lot of small mounds or knolls, on which were growing Jack pine trees mixed with green willows about four feet six inches high, and many blueberry bushes. I was wearing thin leather shoepacks, which are almost as noiseless as moccasins, and, on turning round a corner of one of the knolls, I heard a movement to my left. I looked round quickly. It seemed to me that a young moose was moving in the willow bushes. It was a fairly large brown-coloured body I glimpsed. Then suddenly this brown mass emerged near to an opening, threw up its head and stared straight at me.

It was a large grizzly !

No more than fifteen paces divided us and the bear was standing broadside, with his head turned downhill, looking at me. There was no time or means whereby I could get on the upper side of him, which is a wise thing to do if possible, so I slowly cocked my rifle, raised it to my shoulder and aimed to strike just behind the point of his shoulder. I fired and immediately, as I thought, reloaded my rifle in instant readiness for another shot. At the explosion the bear had leapt into the air and then went round and round in circles,

crashing amongst the bushes, so much so that I could not get another aimed pot at him. While trying to, he suddenly swung round and came straight towards me.

"Make sure of the next bullet," I said to myself, and resolved to hold my fire until he was almost on top of me. Of course, all this happened in a flash in reality. Anyhow, when the bear was, as I thought, about to rush me, I aimed to strike him on the top of his neck, between the shoulder-blades. He came racing on, with his head down, and I pressed the trigger.

Only a click resulted ! A misfire at that moment of crisis !

The mad animal was but a yard or so from me and automatically I was frantically working the lever of the rifle, seeking to eject the dud cartridge and get another one in place. Not that there would have been time ; anything I could do then was utterly useless.

Fortunately, however, my hunter's instinct had prompted me to remain absolutely still. I can recall now after all these years the hot surge of relief that came over me as the grizzly dashed by so close he nearly touched me as he passed. Staggering drunkenly he went loping down the trail. By the time he was forty yards away I had drawn a breath, got a cartridge into position, aimed and fired. That cartridge was a good one. The bear collapsed at the side of the trail and never moved again.

When he was skinned I could find only one bullet-

hole ; this was my first shot, so that although the bear seemed to drop to my second, it must have been just a coincidence that he fell as I fired.

He measured seven feet four inches. His coat was, of course, short, as it would be at that time of year, but all last season's coat had been shed.

I went back to the spot where the misfire had occurred in order to retrieve the cartridge and examine the cap. I could not find it, which was strange, as I knew just about where it should have been. I then unloaded the magazine of my rifle and out came three live cartridges. These and the two that had been discharged made a total of five—all there should have been in the magazine. So there was no dud ! No doubt what happened was that, in my great hurry and excitement—one may reasonably plead guilty to that on encountering one's first grizzly face to face—after firing the initial shot, I had failed to open the under lever to its full extent, thus ejecting the exploded shell, but not taking the next cartridge from the magazine.

Although the bear appeared to be coming straight for me, I do not for an instant believe he even saw me after he was hit ; he just instinctively dashed downhill in a mortally wounded condition. Thanks be, I was not quite in his track or I must have moved, and then he would surely have seen me, and when a grizzly is badly wounded he is extremely dangerous and will go for anything he can see.

It is imperative to keep absolutely still in such circumstances. I recall another occasion when I expected some trouble with a badly wounded female grizzly. I was lying behind a large granite boulder. This bear had a small cub, and there was no doubt that she was looking for me, but by remaining perfectly still, I was enabled to get a broadside shot at close range, killing her dead on the spot.

It was up in the same neighbourhood that a friend of mine, Jim Christie, had a terrible encounter with a grizzly. He and his partner were trapping near the north fork of the Stewart River, within twenty-five miles of my camp on Russel Creek, though at the time I had no idea these men were so close to me.

They had just finished building a log cabin as their winter headquarters. From here they would run trapping lines in various directions as soon as the snow fell. Christie's partner on this particular day of the bear fight had stated that he would go off in a certain direction through the spruce woods and start blazing a trail for one of their lines.

"If I'm not back to-night I guess I'll be away three days ; depends on the going," he said as he pushed off.

Jim Christie had arranged to climb the nearby mountain range and see if he could shoot some game for their winter supply of meat, either moose, caribou or sheep. It was October ; there was snow on the ground and it was freezing hard at night.



The Author's small garden on the Yukon. Radishes as large as turnips.



The Author's camp at mouth of Russell Creek, August, 1900. Duncan Gillis (first discoverer of gold on Russell Creek) on right.



Setting out on the 600-mile drift down the McMillan, Pell, and Yukon Rivers to Dawson after sixteen months' isolation. Pomeroy (wearing hat) and George Leith on shore. John Barr in stern of boat. Our two splendid dogs "Jumbo" and "Sim," now grown up, in bow of boat.

Christie climbed up towards timber line and hunted for game as he went along, keeping a look out for sheep on the bare ridges and upper slopes of the mountain. He was hard as nails, short, well-made, in perfect physical condition and about forty years of age. Tireless, he was soon above timber line and proceeded to cross a narrow ravine or gulch with a small mountain stream running through it. He forded this small stream and ascended the bank on the opposite side, which would take him out on a willow-covered bench overlooking a wide expanse of country below him. It was as he neared the top that he found himself almost face to face with a huge grizzly bear !

Without a moment's hesitation Christie took quick and careful aim and pulled the trigger. He heard his bullet strike and the grizzly turned round and rushed into the short willow bushes. After him went Christie, expecting, naturally enough, to come upon a dead animal, a little excited no doubt at his bag. He pushed into the willows, but before he had gone twenty steps a brown fury leapt at him. The bear was not quite done. Wounded badly, he had laid down in the clump of young trees, but the sound of his enemy's approach had incensed him sufficiently to rouse him.

Christie was too close to the infuriated animal to shoot or in any way to defend himself. In his utter helplessness, he raised his arms, the rifle grasped in his hands. With one paw the bear sent the rifle flying and then

attacked the trapper with mad mercilessness. He buried his great teeth in the man's right arm, clawed his head until the poor fellow was scalped. Then he bit Christie in the lower jaw, snapping the bone, while his claws were doing pitiful damage to his face. In a few more moments the man must have been mauled to death. But just then what seemed a miracle happened. The bear dropped dead.

What had happened was that Christie's shot had been fatal, but grizzlies have such enormous vitality that this one fought on after he was killed, so to speak—though the heart had stopped, the muscular activity continued, still operating in instinctive fight against his eternal enemy—man. On two occasions I have personally known grizzlies run nearly two hundred yards with a 450 Express bullet through lungs and heart. It may be only a minute that this muscular life carries on after mortal hurt—but it was long enough to put poor Christie into very bad shape.

And there he was, a mass of blood, lying by the side of the dead bear, six miles from his camp, all alone, in late afternoon, snow on the ground and a threat of keen frost in the air. It was a desperate situation. Recounting the episode to me afterwards he said his first inclination was to remain where he was and sleep. He felt it would be impossible to get back to camp; he was too badly damaged and was becoming weak from loss of blood. It was impossible for him to do anything to his wounds. He had one coloured handkerchief with him, and that was all.

Then fortunately his mind functioned sufficiently to make him realise that if he remained out in the mountains all night, he would probably be too stiff and ill to move at daybreak, also to remember that wolves were fairly numerous in the vicinity, and if a pack of these animals should scent him during the night a violent death would be certain ; a horrible death.

So Christie determined he would struggle with his last breath to reach his cabin. He never remembers how he fought his way down into the valley, through heavy brush and spruce timber and willows, until just after dusk he reached the haven of his hut. He was utterly exhausted, but, spreading out his caribou-skin sleeping-bag, he lay down on his bunk with much thanksgiving. He had, at least, cheated the wolves. And good luck was to follow. For shortly after his partner also returned.

What a shock he had when a candle was lighted and he surveyed Christie's injuries. He was almost scalped, as in Red Indian days, and his face was awful to behold. All hope of immediate medical aid was out of the question ; Dawson City was the nearest parish, the next over five hundred miles distant. Christie's partner rendered the best first aid he possibly could with the meagre things which they had at their disposal ; the partner gave up any idea of trapping and remained with Jim to keep the cabin warm and look after his injuries.

After about a week, the idea occurred to Christie that

perhaps he might get some help from a tribe of Indians whose headquarters were on the north fork of the Stewart River, in the neighbourhood of Lansing Creek, after which the tribe was named: "The Lansing Creek Indians." He thought that some of the Indian women might be able to patch up his wounds better than he and his partner were able to do.

The country was now covered with snow, so the partner set forth on his snow-shoes to locate the camp of the Lansing Indians and explain what had happened. He found them all right and told them his story. Without the slightest hesitation, all the young and energetic squaws were anxious to leave then and there with some of their young Indian husbands to go after Christie. It was eventually decided that two women, with several young Indians, should leave next day with the dog teams and toboggans and bring Christie back to the camp and take care of him.

For over two months those Indian women nursed the injured white man to the best of their ability until his wounds healed. Of course they had no antiseptics or surgical bandages of any sort, but Christie had some soap and with boiling water they washed the bits of rags and coloured material which Indian women buy from the trading posts and which they used for bandages. No one in the camp could set the broken jaw; this healed up and poor Christie was unable to close his mouth by about one inch. It was decided that directly the rivers

froze up solid, and plenty of snow had fallen, the Indians would wrap the wounded man up in warm caribou skins and set out by dog team and toboggan for Dawson City with him, where he could obtain surgical aid.

Christie eventually reached Dawson in safety. He was examined by the local medical man, who informed him that only very expert surgeons could attempt to restore his head, face and jaw to normal, and advised him to go out to Victoria, Vancouver Island, and see a certain Dr. Jones, who had established a record as one of the most brilliant surgeons on the Pacific coast. Christie accepted this advice and Dr. Jones completed successfully several wonderful skin operations on his face and head so that only one or two narrow scars were ever visible afterwards.

I must add a few lines about Jim Christie, a man so typical of the breed who fearlessly penetrate the unknown. That bear fight didn't daunt his spirit or break his nerve. After years in the North, at the outbreak of war he enlisted in the newly formed Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, giving his age as thirty-six, whereas it was nearer fifty. He went overseas with his regiment and took part in the famous Second Battle of Ypres. He sniped practically throughout the hours of daylight of April 22nd from a position behind the trunk of a tree, which had been uprooted by shell-fire. Christie was an expert shot and, as the Germans attacked in more or less massed formation, it is not at all unlikely

that he accounted for possibly a hundred or more of the enemy.

Later he received his commission as Lieutenant, and was appointed Scout Officer, in charge of the battalion scouts—observers and snipers. Just before that he won the D.S.M. for conspicuous bravery on patrol in no-man's-land, where he was severely wounded. His commanding officer one day told me that it was difficult to keep Christie out of no-man's-land, and they thought of hanging a bell on him so that his whereabouts might be known ! In 1916 I met Christie once more (a reunion of old Yukoners) at Pernes, a small village near Bethune. We had much to say to each other, and wondered whether we should ever return to the Land of the Midnight Sun. In 1917 Christie was again wounded and won the Military Cross ; he was invalided to England at last and did not return to the front again.

In July, 1920, we ran into each other at Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. Christie could not resist the Call of the Wild, and had returned to the scenes of his trapping days.

But things had changed, a different community now reigned—a different type of man—and Jim turned his back once again on the Great Northland. I wished him good-bye as he boarded the train at Whitehorse *en route* for Skagway and civilisation. Finally, in 1923, I heard of him for the last time. He had been appointed a forest ranger in Jasper National Park, under the auspices of the Dominion Parks Branch of Canada.

CHAPTER XIV

A TERRIBLE RIVER TRIP

THERE was little time for pleasure on Russel Creek. Even at night when we could no longer go out, after the cabins were built, we spent many a full hour manufacturing our own furniture. Only the spring mattress and one arm-chair did we take by way of luxuries—yes, and how I cursed that chair the day I hiked it over from McMillan to the camp, thirteen miles of hard going with that uncomfortable and ungainly thing strapped on my back ! But really it was like setting up housekeeping all over again, making tables, knocking-up shelves, constructing chairs. All this, of course, after we had built the home, made it snug with a moss roof—which Barney had a way of grazing on !—and warm with wood floors. There was a spot of plumbing to do, too, and some contriving to supply the washstand ! But that side of the business was good fun and also we managed to snatch an hour now and then to stroll together into the amazingly beautiful country that surrounded us—great mountains with spruce and fir wood on the lower ranges. Marian was delighted with the outlook the first time it was

covered with snow and, of course, she was enraptured with the scintillating and kaleidoscopic display of the Northern Lights. They really are worth travelling from England to the North to see. Occasionally we played bridge in the evenings or wound up the gramophone and heard Melba (a relative of mine) sing.

But for the most part it was sheer grind, and towards the time for the men's departure it was more than we could do to complete the cabins. Even though they went and left much to finish, I was getting worried about them. True, it had been an amazingly mild autumn, but early in October snow had fallen and one night there was a really violent storm. They had 255 miles of river to navigate; downstream, true, but dangerous, and they certainly didn't want to be held up by ice. Their means of transit was an open rowing-boat such as is used by prospectors, about ten feet long, flat-bottomed and roughly built from boards whip-sawed out of spruce trees that grow so plentifully in the Yukon. There was plenty of room for the three men who were going out, but it was a bit late for that long journey and I had watched the temperature falling with anxiety a few days before they left.

We had a little musical party on October 11th and on the 12th they set off for the McMillan. We went with them because we were in the midst just then of fetching up a lot of supplies that had been cached there. Pomeroy stayed to see them actually depart on the 13th.



The McMillan River at the mouth of Russell Creek, October, 1905. Gazing on the sight our wives only now realize that we are frozen in 300 miles from nowhere for at least eight months.



The faithful "Barney" hauling supplies for our main camp on the McMillan River to our cabins on Russell Creek. Pomeroy and Mrs. Armstrong on right.

THE McMILLAN RIVER
RUSSELL CREEK



Our first summer camp on Russell Creek. And prospecting for gold on low bench below camp. Here coarse gold was found.



Our first nozzle or giant in operation on Russell Creek. George Leith is standing in sluice box.

They set off at eight o'clock in the morning and when Leith and I arrived at the river later in the day, Pomeroy told us they had gone without taking any tea, though I had given them practically a free hand to provide themselves with what supplies they liked.

As a matter of fact, like a good many other fellows in the North, they were a bit careless, the sort that leave things to fate hoping everything will turn out all right. There is no doubt that from what I learned later, they took that rather tremendous journey far too lightly. They regarded it as all in the day's work—and being now on their own, apparently didn't mean that work to be any harder than they could help! It was urgent that they made all speed in order to be ahead of the ice, but from the start they determined to have as pleasant a time as possible and make the journey in easy stages.

Their first day's journey amounted to only twenty-five miles. Going downstream, had they chosen, they could have doubled that distance. Next morning none of them was moving until nearly noon and the same thing happened the following day. It was asking for trouble—and they got it!

They woke to realities on the third day, for then they ran into ice. They might have expected that for it had been freezing each night and it doesn't take long for a river to be covered when the mercury plonks down to zero, as it did on the 16th. They were worried to see

the river frozen over and examination discovered to them that it was in that state for at least two miles. Alarmed now, they made a rough sledge and, heaving the boat on to it, hauled it again to open water. But they were behind the game. From then onwards the ice beat them, so rapidly forming they could no longer cross a bad strip and find water once more. They were hemmed in.

That meant the abandoning of the boat.

They took to the river bank and continued on foot—with Selkirk some 200 miles ahead! No rifle or ammunition was being carried and they were therefore unable to secure any game for food. Their matches, too, were running short. They had no tea. French was the oldest man of the party, being about fifty-six, and suffering from varicose veins in his legs. He could travel but slowly and held back the other two—Landale and Jackson by name.

They were in a very bad way when they reached Kalzas River—almost starving and very weak. Food was about done; indeed, they were in such perilous plight that a portion of the one fur robe they carried with them had been sliced into strips (after cutting off the fur), boiled and eaten—as far as it could be eaten.

At Kalzas Creek they found Tom Horsfall and his half-breed wife, both of them well-known trappers of the McMillan and Pelly Rivers. Horsfall had established his winter headquarters there, where he had built

himself a log cabin. It was this cabin that the men fortunately stumbled on. Horsfall saw their condition and wisely refused to let them have much food at first. Mrs. Horsfall gave them some warm canned milk and then let them rest. They remained here two days as Horsfall was unable to give them any supplies to speak of; he had only a small stock to see himself, his wife and three children through a long winter.

Kalzas Creek is 120 miles from Fort Selkirk, the nearest place where provisions and transportation could be obtained. The three men set out again with a small supply of tea and some moose meat. Snow had now fallen heavily, making walking bad. When they reached the Pelly Canyon they found open water and an old Indian skin canoe. This they patched up and were able, very thankfully, to paddle downstream about twenty miles, where they again were held up by solid ice and were compelled to take to the bank once more.

George French was now a sick man and could walk but slowly and with much pain. They all were suffering from acute hunger and exposure. George French's tongue was much swollen and altogether they were in a bad way.

Directly they reached the Pelly River the walking was much better. The banks here are composed of a succession of gravel benches intersected by narrow streams or creeks. Some of these benches are as level as a billiard-table and extend for miles on end. Once

having reached these the three men experienced much relief. Finally, when just about at the end of their endurance, they came to what is known as the Pelly farm. This is situated on the right bank of the river, six miles from Fort Selkirk, where 160 acres or so of alluvial soil have been farmed for a good many years by some Swedes. They raise wonderful crops of potatoes and hay and grain which mature about one year in three. They have a few cattle and some pigs.

Our three men reached this haven and their troubles should have been over, but Jackson foolishly gave way to his hunger and ate too much, which made him very ill indeed for a week. Landale remained only a few hours at the farm and then went on the last six miles to Fort Selkirk. Landale, although the smallest man of the three, was the least exhausted. To his credit I may say that he faithfully carried a fairly large parcel of my camera films done up in hermetically sealed tins and delivered them in Dawson for me. Under similar conditions I should have felt inclined to leave them in Horsfall's cabin or cache them at some prominent landmark.

George French left the Yukon that winter and I never saw him again, but we met both Landale and Jackson on our return. And here's a remarkable example of the topsy-turvy manner of life in those days. Jackson had been interested in what we had told him once about palmistry and, to our intense amusement, he told us

that when he got back to Dawson he hired a small office, furnished it appropriately with heavy curtains, incense receptacles, and subdued lights, and, disguising himself with grey hair and a long grey beard and wearing flowing vestments, he became a fortune-teller! Having acted as cook at the Royal North West Mounted Police Barracks in Dawson for a long time, he was naturally in a position to know a good deal about the private lives, both past and present, of some of the inspectors, their wives and other prominent Dawsonians. In any event he became almost immediately successful, his reputation spread all over the surrounding district and in three months Jackson had amassed a profit of over \$1500 or £300. He felt by then he had exhausted most of his knowledge of the local residents so he decided to leave the Yukon and establish another fortune-telling headquarters in Seattle. This I know he did, but I don't know what success he achieved in that more sophisticated atmosphere—if any.

Meanwhile, knowing, of course, nothing of the disaster that had overtaken our men, we at Russel Creek were making every possible preparation to meet the winter. Looking back I find we touched zero for the first time on the 16th and it was beastly still struggling with floorboards and such like. I guess Marian also thought it a real black Monday as she did the usual weekly wash. Out on the trail it was worse, however. We continued to make trips to the McMillan cache. On the 17th the

river was frozen over, but sufficient to stand no more than a man's weight. It was awful getting Barney across and that night I simply couldn't bring the sledge home. Snow had obliterated the trail and I floundered among fallen trees and roots ; the thing kept toppling over. In the end I was compelled to leave it, arriving home in pitch darkness and a blinding snow-storm. And then, if you please, when we had the trail something like in going order a real thaw set in for days on end and made everything a mess again. Still we caught fine fish—two trout, real beauties, tipping the scales at 6 lbs. each ; finished work on all the cabins and had time to go after game.

That last was urgent ; we wanted much more meat for the winter. I may say here, without going into full details, that during our time at Russel Creek in all Pom, Leith and I bagged 14 moose, 1 caribou, 1 sheep, 34 ptarmigan, 3 duck, 3 snipe and 20 rabbits in addition to catching over 60 trout. Many a time we came on moose when not provided with the necessary rifle—on one such occasion I counted 25 in three-quarters of a mile trek—but the point is we shot enough to keep us plentifully supplied. Later on, when the great cold came, we also did a good deal of trapping.

This latter had its drawbacks ; it is unquestionably cruel if one has to use steel traps as we did.

If the reader should imagine that men who dare the wilds are of necessity callous, let me assure him this is

not the case. The professional trapper will spend months in the fall of the year setting out his lines with what are called dead falls. These are traps which kill with no suffering to the animal, death being practically instantaneous. To set out such a trap-line, which may be up to a hundred miles in length, takes a man many months of work. The line must be blazed both ways—that is out and back—and at the end of every ten or twelve miles a shelter has to be built, a small log cabin where the fur can be thawed out and the man can take shelter for the night.

Trapping is carried on after the snow comes. It is only then that the trapper can tell whether fur is at all plentiful in the neighbourhood he has chosen—he sees the tracks in the snow. If he is unlucky, he is forced to set a line in a new direction and it is then that he must resort to steel traps for there is now no time to arrange dead falls. He would very much sooner not do this since it means that all his autumn labour has gone for naught. He can, of course, now place his traps where he knows from actual signs that fur is about. As a rule every trap is visited once in every ten days, so you can estimate the hundreds of miles a trapper covers during a winter season—often for little result. Before the actual season starts he has to shoot sufficient meat to keep him over the winter. He will probably get four or five moose or caribou which he will be sure to place in a cache specially built well off the ground so as to avoid

its loss by heavy snows or depredations by bears and wolves.

We had to use steel traps and there were occasions when it rather wrung the heart at sight of them. I remember once looking down on the steel jaws which had closed on the foot of a marten. The foot was there, but the animal had departed—having gnawed through his own foot in order to effect an escape. It was distinctly unpleasant to know also that these pretty animals when caught always froze to death—though as I said before, death by freezing is practically easy oblivion.

Our bag of fur was 28 marten, 1 cross fox, 3 weasel, 7 lynx, and at all events the ladies were always delighted when a new fur was brought in to be skinned and stretched. We should have had more but Hudson Bay magpies were a source of great trouble all the winter, springing our traps. We caught or killed 70 of these birds, also 2 squirrels and 2 mice. Two martens escaped from our traps, each leaving a foot behind, and one was eaten up by some other animal, while two traps were carried off either by a marten or a lynx.

John Barr and George Crosby were having not much better fortune over North Fork way. George called on us one day towards the end of November. He brought into our cabin very pungent odours of marten and other skins. I'm afraid he was not over addicted to washing. What I have written about a cache for food reminds

me of his visit. He and John were having trouble from bears and wolves and John had killed a fine grizzly. Just after he had gone we struck real cold. Here is the account of Sunday, the 26th :

First really cold day of the year. At 6 a.m. it was 11° below zero and at 9 a.m. 21° below, at noon it proceeded to 16° below and at the present time, 8 p.m., it is 18° below and falling. It is a bright and clear night, which always presages cold weather ; we must expect that now. Pom took the horse and sled and started out for Canyon Creek at 9 a.m. He is a treasure to be sure. He will have his lunch and feed the horse at Canyon, go on over to Cache Hill and haul up two cases of coal oil, then return to the river and come out to-morrow morning with a load. I sawed and chopped and brought up wood to the house at intervals all day. Leith went out after ptarmigan in the afternoon but failed to find any. He ran into two bull moose quite close to camp yesterday. Mrs. Leith is not well to-day.

Perhaps there was no trouble so near the surface all the time as the fear of serious illness. A few days before this Marian had got a beastly attack of toothache. Probably caused by the queer change of temperature that one experiences in these parts. It is nothing unusual for it to vary 20° in a few hours. Out of a steel

blue sky, with the mercury far below zero, clouds will appear as if by magic, the temperature will jump and snow will be falling.

Not only toothache but sickness overcame her and laid her up. This, right at the beginning of winter, brought a little nervousness to me, and no doubt to her, though we neither mentioned it. She languished for several days and nothing pleased me more during the whole expedition than when she regained her usual robust health.

And here's another entry that gave satisfaction :

We have now sufficient meat for the winter.

CHAPTER XV

THE GREAT COLD

THE spell of biting, almost unbearable cold, hit us in January.

During December we had been down to twenty and thirty below zero, but always came a chinook wind and the mercury would jump up as high even as to twenty above. It was the wind that was the worst feature of this changeable weather. And the snow. When a blizzard is sweeping through the gorges it is impossible to face it, even though there is but 40° of frost. In a few minutes one's moustache is hung with icicles and one's eyebrows solid ice. Breaking trail in such conditions inevitably means a dozen falls and one gets back to camp smothered in snow, often the result of barging into trees, and with one's face coated with ice.

Up in the mountain passes we floundered up to our middles and old Barney was well-nigh buried. We had to take off our snow-shoes so as to make a trail for him by tramping down the snow. We still had to fetch in moose which had been shot and several times we went for it and had to abandon the task. Once Barney, with loose snow up to his belly, refused the job and laid down in his tracks. He would not move until we had

unhitched the load and encouraged him home with soft and wheedling words.

On December 6th it was 19° below zero ; within a week it was 26° above, so that one said how hot it was ! But these rises always brought snow and usually wind, often a regular blizzard, and it was good to get inside after jobs and sit around the red-hot stove listening to the gusts howling about the gables.

From 26° above on December 14th, it sank to 11° below next day. Let me quote the entry for the 15th ; it is typical of many of those days, both revealing conditions and indicating how fully occupied was our time.

Up at 6 a.m. and finished breakfast by 7.30. Pom and the horse left at 8.30 to bring in the load which he was forced to leave on the trail last night, and at 9.45 I left with the dog-team to meet him and retrieve the fore-quarter of moose I left the other day. Met Pom $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles out and he came back about half a mile until I reached my load of meat which I put on my sleigh and then off we went. The dogs were in great form, especially Sim, who suddenly caught sight of a raven flying along ahead of us. He simply took to his heels as hard as he could. It was downhill grade and the sleigh flew. I could not stop the dogs at all and did my best for about three-quarters of a mile to hold the sleigh in the trail. Finally, bang we went into a

tree and smashed the whipple tree in half. Fixed it up and, after many exciting moments going down steep hills, I finally arrived here at 1 p.m. After dinner Pom doctored Barney and I continued sawing and splitting wood. Cleared the snow off the roof of my cabin, which had been leaking rather badly to-day. Filled all the lamps and cut some of the moose meat, which is frozen so hard that it requires an axe to slice off a joint. Set a couple of traps for rabbits to-night. Leith shot a rabbit yesterday which we intend to eat to-morrow.

Would you care to peep in at that remote camp over Christmas? Curiously enough I am writing these lines during Christmas week, 1935, and the home bustle acts as a reminder of that other celebration. Last night the announcer on the wireless broadcast the Postmaster's wish that every one should post early; there will be millions spent this season in stamps on parcels and greetings in this small country of ours which you could cut from an atlas and paste on a map of the North and not blot out the name of a single town! Out there we hadn't received a word of news from home for many moons; not since we left England had we heard how our little eighteen-months-old daughter was. We had sent thirty-odd letters to friends with the men when they left, but we should get no answers, no communications at all from the outside for many months.

In our own way, however, we celebrated the great event. And, as it chanced, it was as mild as it might be in England. On Christmas Eve it was 5° above zero. Come and see what we were doing :

Christmas Eve and 255 miles from civilisation. I wonder who would change places with us ? After all, we are very happy and comfortable so long as good health remains with us. We have plenty to eat, glorious air, invigorating, tempered with the excitement of delving for gold. It is true our fortune hangs on the results of our prospecting work, but with this we are gambling for a big stake. I pray for everyone's sake that we may meet with success. Very busy to-day helping Marian to decorate and prepare for to-morrow. We are giving a dinner-party and our guests will be Leith and his wife, and Pom. Cut fir trees and decorated the cabin inside and out and then helped Pom decorate his cabin. Cooked supper for Marian, who was busy making things look nice in the cabin. After supper Pom and I scrubbed the floor, which was getting horribly dirty. Feel awfully tired to-night. I wonder what they are all doing at home !

Monday. Dec. 25th. Ther. 11° above.

Christmas Day. Marian gave me a present of a hand-knitted silk tie, a box of her own make of

sweets ; the box in which the sweets were placed she had made of birch bark. She gave Pom a hand-worked case for his razors, etc., and Leith a pair of knitted woollen gloves. At 4 p.m., after having taken Marian for a sleigh-ride, we commenced cooking operations. We borrowed Pom's table and Marian made it look awfully attractive with a white table-cloth and drawn-work centre, hand-made paper flowers and little baskets of sweets, also dinner-napkins. Our dinner consisted of soup (moose), ptarmigan and sausages, plum-pudding, mince pie and rum and whiskey. Mrs. Leith accompanied Leith in his songs on the violin (which was rather trying !) and I played them selections on the gramophone. Old Pom got a little heady and no wonder ! the rum is exceedingly strong. We drank to our dear ones near and far and thought continually of our little daughter.

By the 30th it was 22° below again and following the thaw, during which our roof had leaked, we woke to find icicles hanging round our beds. Pretty, but somewhat chilly !

It came with a rush in the end. On January 8th it was 3° above zero—a day, by the way, that showed a very good colour in my pan. The following morning it was 32° below—64° of frost. This violent change, moreover, was accompanied by a gale of wind and the

sort of cold that has to be experienced to be believed. Whatever one wears one feels naked. Forty-four degrees below on the 10th.

The coldest day we have had yet. Up early and down to my drift at eight o'clock ; was afraid my fire would have frozen back, but good luck prevailed and was able to take out about a foot of thaw. Took a pan, but obtained no colours. Leith worked in his drift nearly all day. He put in another set of timbers. His bedrock undulates at all sorts of angles.

After cleaning out my fire I went over to Pom's cabin and he and I cut up a fore- and hind-quarter of moose. Just time to get my gum-boots off and thaw out my feet. Hauled three loads of firewood and one load to Pom. Sim, our huskie pup, goes splendidly now in the sleigh and makes an excellent leader.

Pom has had bad toothache to-day. This is a bad country for toothache. No dentist or anybody to pull teeth. Suffering from aching wrists every night, brought on by the jarring of pick and shovel ; it is most painful. Marian went for a short walk by herself. Mrs. Leith finding it too cold to go out.

A few extracts from the diary now will best indicate our day-by-day existence ;



The "gull" rocks on McMillan River—dangerous to navigation.



About to "shoot" Five Fingers Rapids.

THE NEWSPAPER
PUBLISHED



House of Commons
Canada

Ottawa, Ont.

April 10th, 1926.

Mr. Neville A. D. Armstrong,
West House,
Shawnigan Lake, B.C.

Dear Major Armstrong:

For your information I enclose herewith letter received to-day from the Secretary of the Geographic Board of Canada informing me that the Board has approved the name "Armstrong" for the highest peak of the Russell Mountains, and the name "Armstrong Landing" for your base camp at the mouth of Russell Creek. This seems to me a very fitting action to have been taken by the Board.

With kindest regards,

Yours truly,

Official announcement of the Author's name places on the McMillan River.
(The George Black who signed this letter was Speaker of the Dominion Parliament and an old friend of the Author's in Klondike days.)

Friday. Jan. 12th. Ther. 46° below.

Still colder. The minimum to-day was 38° below zero about noon, and to-night it is 45° below with a strong northerly breeze blowing.

Up at 6.30 and at 8 went down to the fire in my drift, then got my axe and rope and hauled some dry trees to kindle fires, after which I felled several large trees for stove wood. Was driven off the hill by the severe cold and obliged to take shelter in Pom's cabin and thaw myself out. The breeze simply goes right through one and almost chokes one at first when emerging from the warm cabin. After dinner I prepared wood for to-morrow—horribly cold cutting firewood—washed a pan of dirt, but failed to get any colour ; did not expect to as the gravel is full of dry sediment too light to hold gold. The Leith's cream froze up last night which is bad luck for them. M. went for a short walk to-day.

Saturday. Jan 13th. Ther. 45° below.

The cold spell still continues ; no sign of any abatement. Sky perfectly cloudless and a thick haze overhanging the mountain tops, the latter a sure sign of severe weather. Up at 5.45. Lighted the fire in my drift at 7.45, hauled three loads of firewood before 8.45. At 9.15 Pom took Barney

and I took my axe with which I felled trees, he hauling them to the saw-pit. Horribly cold up on the hill and Pom froze his nose. After dinner I cleaned out my drift and then Pom and I sawed and chopped wood until 4.15, when our feet and hands refused to stand the cold any longer. Marian now uses a skipping-rope for exercise, it being too cold for her to go out. Sadly in need of horse feed ; hope the cold will stop very shortly.

Sunday. Jan. 14th. Ther. 52° below.

The coldest day of all so far. Pom came in early at 5.45 and then lighted the fire to thaw things out ; was afraid all our cream was frozen, but thank goodness it is all right so far. As a matter of fact our cabin was not very badly frozen up. The logs cracked with the frost and made sundry noises and we were obliged to move a lynx robe on to our bed, otherwise we did not notice the cold very much. Owing to Pom's toothache we are short of stove wood, so we went down after breakfast and sawed some up. Half an hour was the longest we could endure the cold ; it seemed to burn up one's lungs, almost choked one to work or to walk fast.

Out of hay, so Leith and Pom went on their snow-shoes to the hay meadow and brought back two small feeds for the old horse. The thermometer registers 53° below to-night, and the cold dreary

haze is in the sky. It may go back to 60° below before morning. Sat up till 1 a.m. baking bread and keeping the cabin warm. Marian has not been out for two days. Something has gone wrong with my eyes. I cannot think what can be the matter with them. It feels as if a leaden weight hung on my eyelids all the time. Some murrain or other, doubtless ; perhaps wind or snow glare.

The moment one exerted oneself in this weather and got hot, the perspiration froze until clothes grew stiff as boards. Many a time I had to race for the cabin from the workings in order to dodge frost-bite and thaw out. Instead of abating it became worse.

Friday. Jan 19th. Ther. 53° below.

This weather is awful. So long as the firewood and food holds out we can stand it, but when it becomes necessary to get out in the deep snow on the hillside and chop and haul trees it is anything but a joke. Did not light the fire this morning in my tunnel ; too cold to do good work. Cut off some strips of raw hide and worked them fairly soft to be made into a whip-lash to drive my dog-team.

Took my ermine-skin off the stretchers and turned it fur-side out. My two marten pelts seem to be drying well and hope soon to add to their number.

Sunday. Jan. 21. Ther. 55° below.

Good heavens, still no abatement of this severe spell of weather ! Only absolute necessity compelled myself and Pom to go up the hill and haul down seven fair-sized trees for firewood as we only have a half-day's wood on hand. We accomplished the work without freezing ourselves anywhere, although we both had various falls and were obliged to fly into the cabin. Hauled one load of trees in the afternoon. Later, went up to the hay meadow and brought back a load for the horse. Pom and I, after finishing sawing, fixed up a stove and pipe in the stable ; the poor old horse is nearly frozen up and if this weather should continue he would have frozen to death without any heat. Sim and Bonnie are at daggers drawn and have had two more fights to-day ; don't want Sim to get hurt. About two more weeks' hay up at the meadow.

Monday. Jan. 22nd. Ther. 55° below.

Our hopes of a warm spell setting in were somewhat nipped in the bud when we looked at the thermometer this morning. This is the coldest spell of weather ever experienced in this part of the country. Our windows are an inch thick with frost, which makes the cabin as dark as night. We have

had a lamp burning all day to-day. The sun rises about 10.45 and shines until about 3.30, although we only see it until about 12.30, when it disappears behind the neighbouring mountains. Went up into the hills after breakfast with Pom and felled trees for firewood as we are awfully short of wood owing to the cold and the danger of working old Barney, he being likely to drop dead.

Lighted a fire in my drift and cleaned it out after dinner ; bad thaw. Split and hauled wood here and to Pom's cabin. Leith took out a fire. Horribly cold to-night.

Tuesday. January 23rd. Ther. 58° below.

Good heavens ! 58° below zero, with not the remotest sign of a change of weather ; still no suggestion whatever of the smallest cloud, without the appearance of which we cannot hope for any relief. My bread did not freeze during the night, thank goodness. I had it wrapped up in fur coats and towels and all sorts of warm clothing. Made my dough into loaves after breakfast and set to raise, then hauled two loads of firewood here and one to Pom's cabin. Cold enough to make one choke and quite impossible to walk fast without getting out of breath. After dinner I hauled trees down to the sawpit with a rope and Pom sawed them up into stove lengths. I chopped them later.

Managed to stick out the cold until 1 p.m. with the aid of a couple of "warm ups" in the cabin to thaw the ice from moustaches.

Marian has now been shut in the cabin two weeks owing to the extreme cold.

Lighted a fire in Barney's stable.

Wednesday. Jan. 24th. Ther. 56° below.

At 6 a.m. the thermometer registered as above ; at noon it was 53° below, at 3.30 44° below, at 6 p.m. 38° below and at 10 p.m. 30° below. By to-morrow I think it will be quite warm. Even to-night at 30° below we are almost boiled in the cabin, so great is the change of temperature. Just 28° since morning. This has been the longest cold spell I have known and it has almost got upon our nerves with the intense strain of any sort of movement.

After breakfast Pom took the pack and my snow-shoes and mushed off to the hay meadow for a load of hay for poor old Barney, who is looking very thin these days. I hauled trees down to the sawpit and split and sawed firewood until noon. After dinner I hauled four loads of firewood with the dogs, cut up two weeks' firewood for my drift and then chopped until 5.15 for my tunnel.

Thursday. Jan. 25th. Ther. 23° below.

Thank heaven the cold spell is over, at least for one day. What a relief it all is ! Were able to clean some of the ice off our windows which let in a little light for a change. After breakfast I lighted my fire in No. 2 tunnel and then cut and hauled down about one cord of firewood for my drift, which occupied me until noon. Lunch over, I harnessed the dogs to the sleigh and started off for the hay meadow to get a load for Barney. Marian and Mrs. Leith came with me and I gave them a lift in turn as far as George Creek, my trail being along the snow-shoe track made by Leith and Pom, which bore me up very well, occasionally I would brake through up to my middle, which is rather annoying. I put on a fair load of hay and returned to camp at 4 p.m. Cleaned out my fire by 5.15 and after supper went up to the Leith's and played a rubber of bridge, myself and Mrs. Leith winning.

Pom hauled trees to the sawpit with Barney all the afternoon.

Two days later it was 33° above zero, actually over freezing point. A variation of 83° in two days ! Everything began to thaw, the drip, drip of melting snow could be heard all day. Of course, it froze again—even as late as March 18th it was 20° below—but the Big

Cold was passed, that almost eerie brittle stillness when trees will snap like pistol shots and one seems to move with pain in a difficult world of unreality. I used to think those nights of the poor trappers out in the open, curled up in blankets under whatever shelter rock or shrub might offer, a hundred miles or more from the nearest human being.

Gradually it seemed as if a gigantic hand that had held the country in an iron grip relaxed. Life stirred again. Through the firs Indians were moving, as we were to realise shortly when one or two strayed into our camp and we met a family, including five babies, near our cache on the McMillan. The willows began to bud, the dogs to shed their coats and we were able to plan an excursion after sheep. This was the last day of February.

At 9 a.m. Pom and I left camp with our pack-saddles loaded down and carrying our snow-shoes and rifles in our hands. I carried the fur robe, an axe and a small bag of socks and mitts, etc. Pom took a waterproof sheet, the grub and cooking utensils, a rifle and snow-shoes. Killed a ptarmigan before reaching the lake. Arrived at camping-ground 12.30, fixed up our bedding, chopped some dry wood, then off at 2.30 into the mountains to try for sheep. We travelled hard until 4.30 without seeing anything but a few ptarmigan and marten

tracks. Am doubtful if sheep remain in these mountains through the winter. I think they go over to the higher ranges. Back in camp at 6, and had cold tongue and bread and rock cake ; then a smoke and a yarn until about 9.30, when we built a huge fire and turned in. Slept in all our clothes, including fur cap. Four feet of snow all round us. Woke up frequently during the night from hardness of couch. Must be getting soft, pampered with spring mattress !

For three days we hunted, but saw no sheep, only a few ptarmigan, and I was glad to get back to the cabin.

All the time we were busy now in the tunnels, always hoping that we should come on something more than merely promising prospects. It was, of course, hard and rough work. Dangerous, too, at times, for huge boulders had a way of falling from the roof of the main tunnel. Once I had just left the spot where one crashed down and on another occasion I was not so lucky, being hit on the back with one—not one of the biggest, or my prospecting days would have ended. True, it came out of a huge mass, but the bulk remained where it was. Pom managed to strike a pick into his foot, a very nasty injury which held him indoors for many days. But on the whole we were fortunate in that, for the entire sixteen months we remained out of touch with the world, we encountered no really serious accident or illness.

When one is thirty, one doesn't anticipate bad health and we were all young and full of beans. Mrs. Leith was only twenty-three, the youngest of the party. And since I have mentioned her, I may state here that the real tragedy of that trip to the Yukon concerned her.

It was after we had come from the Arctic and were back in the every-day world that she underwent a slight operation in Victoria, B.C. Septic poisoning set in and she died. One hates tritisms, but it did seem strange that she should have weathered the dangers and rigours of the long sojourn on the McMillan to end so tragically from what at first appeared to be but a trivial complaint.

With the breaking of the intense cold weather, John Barr arrived at our camp. He told us it had taken him three days to cover the twelve miles from the point of the river he had left to come over to Russel Creek. He had to fell trees to cross swollen tributaries and was compelled to make wide detours to avoid places he could not cross even with the aid of improvised bridges. He was thoroughly played out and when he put in an appearance was thoroughly soaked. A spot despondent, too. He had experienced a pretty poor winter's trapping. His catch had been about half what it was the year before—this time only 91 lynx, 42 beaver, 7 wolves, 3 wolverines, 3 otter, 4 martens, 16 minx. The lot was worth about \$800. But he had shot that bear I have already mentioned and that was a beauty. I saw it later and it measured 7 feet 10 inches from nose to tail.

It was one of the largest known specimens in the world. He stayed the night with us and then went off to Selkirk. You can imagine that we didn't shine as hosts, since he offered to take mail for us and so all that evening Marian and I spent writing letters to friends at home. It was a pleasure we had not enjoyed since the men had gone out in the fall and now it was the beginning of June.

We waited anxiously for John's return, expecting him about the middle of July. But the days went by and there was no sign of him. My notes show how glad we were when at length he did put in an appearance.

Sunday. July 29th.

Cold and wet to-day. Spent all the morning clearing out the cabin and getting things tidied up a bit. At lunch after talking over the lateness of John Barr's arrival, we heard a shout and to our joy beheld him and another trapper named Horsfall at the door. They were laden with mail and tobacco for us, also a bottle of whiskey. They had been landed by the steamer *Prospector*, 15 miles below here ; she could not get any closer owing to the shallowness of the water. Some eggs and fresh potatoes they also brought. We have now been exactly one year and three weeks without any news whatever of the outside world.

Our letters, papers and magazines numbered

legion. Poor Uncle Seymour is dead and also Buz Myres. Teddy and Gertie are married. Toby is Vice-Consul at Leopoldville on the Belgian Congo. My father is in South Africa putting through the Zambesi River water power scheme. Uncle S's death leaves us £200 per annum. John and Horsfall left again at 5 p.m.

You will never be able to appreciate how we enjoyed a meal of eggs and "taters," the first for a year.

Gradually the time was approaching when we should take our departure. We had passed the anniversary of our landing—and the mosquitoes were with us again! I had cleared out the tent and turned it into a garden in which Marian set seeds of various vegetables. It wasn't a great success, but we did get a feed of turnips. Since the previous July we had not eaten any fresh vegetables and it was a treat.

We thought the bad weather was finished, but on June 26th I find we had a heavy fall of snow, four inches deep and it was that day I shot a caribou and on the way back to camp came across the head of a moose I had shot five years before. In the same day's record I see, also, that Pom just failed to land a tremendous trout. It would have weighed thirty pounds if an ounce, he declared, and broke the tackle.

And here are one or two other items culled from the diary which throw a light on life as we lived it—its pleasures and excitement.

At the end of July I caught a rat. That may not sound remarkable, yet it was. There was no such animal known in those parts. It must have come up in a bag of flour all the way from Dawson and wintered with us, all unsuspected. About this time, too, a dog loped into camp. I have never seen so thin and worn a creature. It was George Crosbie's and had been left behind three months before. All that time the little fellow had wandered in the forest. He was ready to eat himself to death had we let him.

Leith went down last night to try and find my dead moose to clean him, etc. He left here at eight o'clock taking Jumbo and returned at 3 a.m., having failed to find the moose and bringing Jumbo back simply smothered with porcupine quills, a fearful sight—quills covered his nose, jaws, shoulders, chest and tongue. We operated on him with the nippers and removed them from his mouth. Leith said the trail was terrible.

At ten o'clock I left for the scene of the moose slaughter, going by way of Pom's cabin and taking the high ridge on the left bank of Russel Creek. Pom took Barney and went down our usual trail to meet me. After an awful walk up and down steep hills and crossing torrents, fallen trees, etc., I arrived at the moose at 12.30. I skinned him and cut up the hind-quarters. A very large moose.

He was hit in one fore-leg, on top of his back, and through the heart. After skinning I turned down to the side of the creek and made a raft, this took me until 6 p.m., Pom and Barney had already arrived on opposite side of creek. Having finished the raft I placed one quarter of moose on it, made fast with a rope and heaved the other end across the stream to Pom, then the raft was pushed into the swollen current and Pom pulled for dear life. Alas! the rope broke and away went raft, meat, my pack saddle and all, and thus ended six hours' hard labour. Ate my dinner at six o'clock before commencing homeward journey. Awful trail. Arrived in camp at nine o'clock absolutely worn out.

Saturday. July 14th.

Very hot. Slight leak in the ditch at the back of our cabin in the morning, but after shovelling for about an hour managed to stop it. About 4, while I was about to hoist a rock out of the cut, there was a piercing yell and on looking round I saw Marian waving frantically to me. In an instant I guessed the ditch had gone behind our cabin. It had. A mighty roaring, rushing torrent was pouring all round the cabin. Leith and I nearly exhausted from running in gum-boots to the head gate to shut off the water. On arrival we found Mrs.

Leith tugging away at the gate with all her strength and soaked through. She displayed great presence of mind in keeping up the gate. We fully expected to find the cabin full of water, but, thank goodness, we got not a drop. One sack of flour only was slightly damaged in the cabin.

Saturday. Aug. 4th.

Sunshine and warm all day. Being out of meat, started for the hills. In the basin of John Creek saw a large bull moose lying under a balsam tree. Owing to open nature of ground could not stalk him, so tried a long-range shot and missed. Went on up towards Chang Mountains, then along George Creek divide. Could not find it. Got lost and expected to have to spend the night out. No matches. Climbed up two sheer walls of loose granite (being in danger any minute of going to the bottom like a bullet) and after traversing the edge of a capped range of mountains for about three-quarter of a mile I got my bearings and found I was, at least, four hours from camp. It was then 7.30 and determined to walk for my life knowing what a state M. would be in if I did not return. Began to get dark at 8.30. Reached lake at 8.40 nearly dead. Left rifle, shears, and line and struck out in desperation again. Dared not rest, fell over and smashed toes against roots. Reached camp in

time to prevent Leith and Pom starting off in search of me. Marian in a dreadful state of anxiety. Went to bed after swallowing some brandy and a saucer of rice pudding. Absolutely dead.

Saturday. August 25th.

One of the hottest days we have had this month. Just after writing up my diary last night the dogs barked and in walked F. C. Selous, the famous African big game hunter. I was surprised, not having heard he was coming in this year. He left England on July 12th, and Fort Selkirk on August 10th, in a big canoe with two guides, one a half-breed and one an American slave-driver. They have poled up the 250 miles in 14 days ; a record. Selous came all the way up here to deliver some letters he got from the Post Office in Fort Selkirk. He is after caribou principally and also wants to get another good moose. He left this morning at 8.15 and wishes to remain up here until September 25th.

Worked in the cut until 3 p.m., when we shut off the water and commenced to take up bedrock. This being the commencement of our final clear up. How much gold shall we get I wonder ?

CHAPTER XVI

END OF THE TRIP—AND ITS RESULTS

WELL, we didn't get much. The final accounting is not in my diary ; indeed I have just quoted the last entry. But I need no written word to recall the concluding days at Russel Creek and the trek back to the river and the long, long drift downstream into Dawson.

Personally, though home-comings are always pleasant, I rather hated leaving. It was the sort of life I loved—and if proof of that be necessary it is to be found in the fact that many times I have been back there. I returned the very next year and once again with Leith spent the long winter in the old cabin. There is nothing remarkable about that, I know. Other men have spent winters in those bleak frozen lands ; what made the 1905-06 trip stand out was that we took the two girls with us—they were little more. And they enjoyed it. It was a grand life, despite its hardships, perhaps just a little because of them, for there is a spirit of adventure in most men and women born in these islands. It's a stirring thing to be lord of all you survey as we were.

There is, you know, a voice in the wilderness.

I never turn my back on it save with some regret ; such country holds a fascination far beyond the mere hope of striking it rich. Let me say that I firmly believe there is gold in plenty on Russel Creek. Some day it will yield rich harvest, our prospecting proved that. Before we leave that remote spot let me sum up the results of our seeking.

Our work proved most favourable from a placer mining point of view.

The gold obtained on bedrock was what it known as "coarse" gold, which usually means that it is paystreak gold, namely, that it is associated with a definite deposit of placer gold, the richness and extent of which could only be determined either by luck or strenuous prospecting work.

The finding of coarse gold was most important. Had we just panned fine gold or colours only, we should have been much discouraged as this sort of gold can be found in almost all the wash gravel in the Klondike and is of little value, being unpayable to work except perhaps on an enormous scale under hydraulic methods.

Our work was unsuccessful in that we did not find the main paystreak, which we were convinced existed either in the benches or in the creek.

Owing to the heavy glaciation which had taken place in the Russel Valley through countless ages, it is most probable that the original position of the Creek Valley was at a much higher level than it is at present, and

covered by mineral deposits of slide matter and gravel, and that is what Leith and I were trying to prove by tunnelling and cross-cutting on bedrock.

Under favourable conditions in our main tunnel, that is to say on a "rise" in the bedrock, we nearly always found coarse gold and in one case we washed what might be termed quite a rich pan containing a nugget as well as coarse gold.

We also proved :

The existence of ample water and power either for hydraulicing on a large scale or dredging purposes.

The geology of the district was favourable for gold-bearing quartz and porphyry ledges.

That the McMillan River was navigable as far as Russel Creek for a small light-draught, stern-wheel steamer at high water.

That the country was fairly well stocked with game and fish to support exploration parties and, finally, that our prospects warranted further expenditure of time and money.

Five times I have been there and I am convinced that one day someone will strike that lucky streak. It's a bit like jabbing a fork into a pie-crust ; you might or you might not probe the kidney !

Even that first year every indication was at hand that a paystreak existed somewhere in the valley. We obtained both coarse and fine gold of a high assay value though we were compelled to concentrate our efforts

at one spot where bedrock was exposed on the benches. It was impossible to sink shafts in the Creek because they always filled with water at a depth of about ten feet.

In anticipation of the trip home, I had purchased a long wooden poling boat from a trapper at Fort Selkirk. It was 19 feet long, tapered at each end like the ordinary bow of a row-boat ; in the centre it had a beam of about 5 feet.

For'ard we made a bed of spruce bough and sacks for the dogs. We didn't bring them all back, only the two who had been pups last year—Sim and Jumbo, now a couple of splendid animals. Sim was a thoroughbred huskie in appearance, prick ears, head like a wolf, a wonderful iron-grey to black coat, white chest and legs and a magnificent bushy tail with a white tip to it. He was short coupled and very strong, weighing 78 lbs. Jumbo was a cross between a Saint Bernard and a huskie, he was larger than Sim and had the colouring and coat of a Saint Bernard, only not so large by any means. Both had become almost human in their intelligence.

In the centre of the boat we placed one of our cheap American trunks filled with food and cooking things for our trip. In front of the helmsman were piled our rolls of bedding, with which to form a back rest for our wives who sat side by side. Our two tents were folded flat for our wives to sit on. We built one seat across the centre of the boat for rowing and cut out a pair of oars

from a small spruce tree. It was our intention that one of us should row and one steer, taking it in turns.

Our collection of furs and skins were all carefully packed in strong canvas and sewn up, so that they would float on the surface in case of an accident to the boat. For this same reason matches were carried by Leith and myself in watertight boxes. A small quantity of rifle ammunition and one rifle and our axes were fastened to one of the side ribs of the boat to prevent their loss should the boat overturn. Every precaution was taken in view of our precious cargo to safeguard our boat and ourselves against certain dangers we knew—from past experience—lurked before us during our long journey in a boat which would be heavily laden and difficult to steer in swift water.

You will notice I have not mentioned Pom in connection with our return arrangements. He didn't come out with us. At the end he decided to stay on and spend another winter in the wilds trapping. John Barr agreed to be his partner and with these two fine fellows we left our other dogs—and Blarney.

John had offered to come in the boat in order to steer us through a dangerous channel with which he was well acquainted some eight miles down stream, from which point he would return across country to Russel Creek, where he and Pom were to have headquarters during their winter trapping.

Thus, as we set off, only Pom remained on the river

bank. We frankly funk'd that parting. Pom had been our bulwark. Immensely strong, cheerful, resourceful, without his aid Leith and I and our wives would have been sorely tried. He was one of nature's gentlemen. We clasped hands in silence and I think he knew what we all felt and how thankful we all were to him for his service.

As we shoved off the boat he stood by the edge of the river, hatless, with his long auburn hair and beard disturbed by the wind, his clothes all darned and patched with bits of flour-sacks, canvas, etc., his long arms and huge hands hanging limply by his side. For three-quarters of a mile he was in sight, standing motionless, watching our boat until we turned out of sight at a bend of the river, at which point I fired three rifle-shots in farewell.

We passed safely through the dangerous channel at Mineral Rock, missing a jagged rock by inches, making us aware of the fact that our boat would be difficult to handle in narrow and swift channels or in rocky rapids. We landed John just below and all wished him good hunting. A fine specimen of a trapper and backwoodsman was John Barr, 6 feet 1 inch in height ; then aged 63, his back as straight as a board, long iron-grey hair and beard, keen dark eyes and shaggy eyebrows. He walked from the hip like an Indian.

Thus we left what now is written on the maps as "Armstrong's Landing," watching disappear in the

summer haze "Mt. Armstrong," the highest peak in the Russel Mountains.

A cruel, fascinating country, so remote that it is difficult to bring home its lonesomeness to those who have not penetrated to the lost lands.

Perhaps the most effective way to impress the uninitiated is to tell of a further visit I paid to Russel Creek in that year of ill, 1914.

Early in March, three of us returned, this time in quest of big game. We found the rivers extremely high from the early thawing of the snow in the mountains. We waded into the water up to our middles, hauling our canoe round dangerous log jams, up roaring rapids and occasionally unloading the canoe and carrying it overland to avoid places which were impassable at high water.

On that fatal day of August 4th, 1914, we were hunting mountain sheep near the head waters of the McMillan, entirely oblivious of the commencement of the greatest war the world has known. On that day my diary records that we killed two rams with magnificent heads, their measurements being within half an inch of the record for that particular species of sheep (*Ovis Fannini*).

Our hunting trip was most successful and included 2 grizzly bears, 1 brown bear, 6 caribou (*Rangifer Osborni*), 2 moose (spread $61\frac{1}{2}$ and $58\frac{1}{2}$ inches), 3 sheep (*Ovis Fannini*), 3 timber wolves, 1 wolverine, 1 musk rat.

Besides which, we caught all the fish (trout, greyling, pike) we wanted to eat, and shot with our 22-inch Winchester, ducks, geese, grouse and ptarmigan—and in August we picked bucketfuls of blueberries as well as a few raspberries and red-currants.

On September 17th, having secured all the trophies we required, I decided to make a start downstream for 35 miles to look at our old camp at Russel Creek.

I found everything as we had left it eight years ago. A small mirror which my wife had forgotten was still hanging on its nail. A pair of moccasins which Leith had taken off before closing up his cabin were exactly where he had put them, also wood shavings in readiness to light a fire quickly. A 22-inch Winchester rifle was hanging on the wall.

Flour, raisins, mustard, macaroni, tea and cocoa were all in good condition, just as if we had never gone away.

The matches I discovered were in better condition than those I had with me. No doubt Indians had visited the camp in the course of their hunting and trapping expeditions, but they had touched nothing.

On September 22nd we turned our heads downstream once more *en route* for Fort Selkirk 300 miles away. We had gone up by poling ; now we had the pleasure of slowly floating downstream with currents of various speeds, but as our canoe was overloaded with ourselves and trophies of the chase, we had to be a little careful.

About 2 p.m. on September 26th we noticed in the

distance a man standing on the river bank and below him saw a canoe, also another large object lying near the water's edge which proved to be the carcass of a bull moose. As we approached closer, I spotted who the man was.

"By jove, it's Tom Jeffreys, my old French-Canadian trapper friend," I said to my partners. And then : "But, look, what's the matter with the lad ?"

For Tom had begun to wave his hands in an excited manner, beckoning us to come to the bank at once. He was evidently very worked up about something. Before we could get our canoe to the shore he yelled out in his broken English :

"There is one hell beeg war—the whole world she fight—thousands of Germans be killed—the French they use the dead Germans for the breast works—the British Fleet she sunk in the North Sea !"

And that's how I first heard of the Great War—weeks after the German horde had swamped into Belgium and threatened Paris. I may say we did not readily swallow Tom's tale of the end of Britain's navy !

However, the news was bad in the extreme and then began our race to civilisation. There is little more to be said except that we three parted in Victoria, British Columbia on October 5th. On the 9th I had joined a Canadian Highland Regiment.

In November, 1915, one of my pals of that hunting trip and I met at lunch in Bailleul (Flanders) at the

Headquarters Mess of General Alderson, commanding the 1st Canadian Division. My pal had been to Egypt and Gallipoli, while I had spent some unpleasant moments at Wulverghen and Ypres (Sanctuary Wood).

Although I expected that October of 1914 to be too late to see any active service, I actually "put in" over three years on the Western Front.

The war over, the Far North called again as it ever will call to those whom it has caught in its toils. It is eternal! I returned—and again roamed over my familiar mountains and amongst the willow-clad valleys, fished in the lakes, listened to the eerie whistle of the mountain marmot, watched the giant moose browsing on his favourite willow leaves, and caribou on the moss-covered barrens silhouetted against the sky, sheep feeding amongst the bright green grass and stunted willows at the heads of gulches—and observed an occasional grizzly bear digging ground squirrels high up in the mountains.

The midnight sun—the glorious summer—the Arctic winter—trapping—snowstorms—the Aurora Borealis—a sheaf of memories to give fragrance to one's later years.

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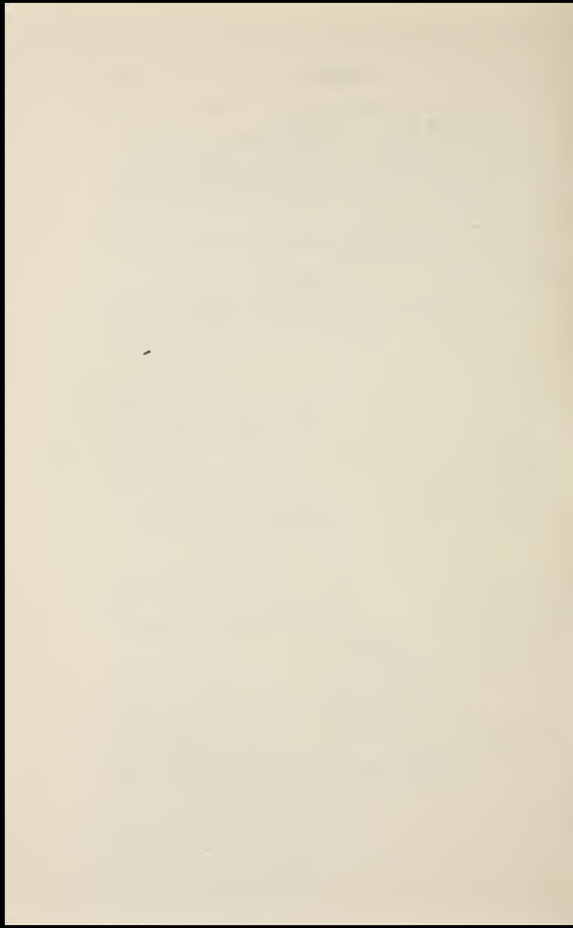
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